

## **Traveler's Rights**

### **Delays and cancellations**

If a flight is delayed or cancelled due to weather or other "Act of God" the airline is responsible for "re-protecting" or re-booking a traveler on the next available flight on their airline. They will do the best they can to get the traveler on the next available flight but depending upon the number of delayed/ canceled flights, it could be hours or even days later before they can provide a new flight option. It is at the airlines' discretion as to whether or not they provide refunds for flights cancelled or delayed due to "Acts of God".

If a flight is delayed or cancelled due to fault of the airline, e.g. mechanical difficulties, crew shortages, etc. many airlines will re-book travelers on another airline but this is not a mandatory policy. In the event of an overnight delay or delay which causes a passenger to purchase an unplanned meal in the airport many airlines will distribute hotel and/or meal vouchers, depending upon the reason for the delay, at their discretion. Travelers should always ask for these accommodations in case they are available but not offered.

If a flight is canceled, substantially delayed, or rescheduled, the traveler has the right to reroute at no extra cost or to receive a full refund, even on a nonrefundable ticket. Please note airline policies vary about what constitutes a "substantial" delay or schedule change. Check the airlines' website for more details or check with your travel agent.

### **Tarmac delays**

The DOT mandates that an airline may not keep passengers on a plane for more than three hours (on a domestic flight) or four hours (on an international flight) during a tarmac delay in the U.S. (upon either arrival or departure), without allowing travelers to disembark, subject to security and safety considerations. Airlines are also obligated to provide food and water after two hours of delay, assure that airplane lavatories are operable, and provide updates to passengers every 30 minutes. If an airline violates the tarmac rules, travelers receive no compensation. The Department of Transportation (DOT) fines the airline instead.

### **Transport to another airport**

In the event of a delay or cancellation the airlines may provide transportation to the nearest airport to arrange for an alternate flight. This may be by bus, shuttle, taxi or other service. Airlines will not pay for car rentals for insurance reasons.

### **Getting bumped**

If a traveler is "bumped" from a flight involuntarily due to overbooking the airlines may owe compensation, unless they assure that the traveler arrives at his/her destination within one hour of the scheduled arrival, in which case it owes the traveler no compensation. If the airline chooses to arrange alternate transportation on another airline, it must cover all of the expenses that the new airline might assess.

**Delayed or lost luggage**

If luggage is lost or delayed (more than 12 hours for a domestic flight or 15 hours after an international flight) airlines are required by law, to refund baggage fees.

**Airline representatives**

Airline representatives at airports almost always have more authority to make changes without penalties than airline reps over the phone or travel agents. These agents will help as much as possible, however, they have to follow the official airline rules and charge penalties when applicable to avoid being billed themselves. Airline reps at the airport have much more leeway to bend the rules.

**Refunds**

Most airlines will refund non-refundable tickets for voluntary cancellations by a traveler only in extreme circumstances such as death of a family member or sometimes with a note from the traveler's doctor advising he/she is not able to travel due to medical reasons. Refunds of non-refundable tickets are always at the airlines' discretion.

**Name changes**

All airline tickets are non-transferrable. Credit for cancelled tickets remains in the name of the traveler, not the purchaser. If a name change on a credit is needed due to an extenuating circumstance, it is recommended that a travel agent from the agency where the original ticket was issued is consulted to see if they are able to obtain a waiver from the airline.

**Resources**

<http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/publications/flyrights.htm#airfares>

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/flights/2016/04/14/airline-passenger-rights-canceled-flight/82985344/>

*\*\* This document is intended to give general information on traveler's rights and responsibilities. As each airline may have different policies for handling travel events that can occur, please check the airline's website for more specific details.*