BRACE YOURSELVES: 5 TIPS FOR EFFICIENT CHRISTMAS FLIGHT

News / Airlines

Since Christmas period is historically terrible for flying – there's 50% chance to get your flight delayed – knowing which situations are due to unruly weather and which are subject to airline manipulation, becomes a hard nut to crack. While a smoking volcano is all self-evident reason to halt flights, the threshold between the dangerous and safe weather is clear only to the aviation specialists. However, this makes it easy for the airlines to manipulate the reasons behind delays and hard for passengers to defend their rights in the event of flight disruption.

According to data provided by Eurocontrol, winter holidays are the second worst season for flying after summer. Data shows that the 2016 summer season and December to January have had the worst all-causes delays all year. Last year, 4,5 million British travellers fled the country over Christmas and the New Year with storm Barbara threatening holiday gateway with up to 90 mph winds. While commercial aircraft are designed to fly in pretty extreme settings, airports together with airlines take on the responsibility of deciding whether it should shut down and ground flights.

In case of long delays and cancellations EU Regulation 261/2004 protects air passengers travelling within and to/from the EU. Yet if the airline can prove that the disruption was

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caused by “extraordinary circumstances” (incl. hijacking, extreme weather conditions or a natural disaster) it is no longer responsible for compensating the delay by paying out up to €600. Opting to help European travellers to understand the tricky force majeure situations during the busy winter season, flight compensation company SKYCOP has prepared a list of situations and conditions that will guide Christmas travellers and help understanding which disruptions are claimable and which situations are not:

1) Queues

Airports hire additional personnel or gather all of the on-contract staff to take care of the holiday mass. Since the infrastructure has been prepared, the only thing that keeps you waiting at the airport is probably due to airlines employees. It is not uncommon for carriers to miscalculate the hands necessary to handle increased flows of travellers, thus, if you feel like that was a reason for your delay – find a form, fill it and claim your compensation.

2) Last-minute de-icing

Just like ice on your car’s window, plane’s wings also need to be de-iced every time it lands in below zero temperatures. Aircraft often wait in line to be defrosted due to often limited amount of airport’s de-icing equipment. However, the procedure can be controlled and organised in a way to get the planes aloft on time. Thus, if your flight is delayed because of de-icing, make sure to file a claim for up to €600 compensation.

3) Crew illness

Increase in colds, viruses and other illnesses during winter have been observed for centuries and it is inevitable that airline employees will fall ill at some point. Airlines must ensure that in case a pilot or any other crew member calls in sick, there is a substitute professional to replace the sick staff member. For this reason, crew sickness is not an extraordinary circumstance and passengers suffering from delays caused by crew sickness are entitled to flight compensation.

4) Delayed boarding due to aircraft being late

Given it is still winter and not every airport has been struck by global warming, some may become very snowy really fast, thus it would not be unbelievable to hear that the aircraft you should use is stuck somewhere else. However, it won’t necessarily mean that it is late due to an extraordinary circumstance. Get to the bottom of it yourself or use the help of professionals to get your compensation.

5) A technical problem.

Since no component of an aircraft lasts forever, dealing with technical problems is intrinsic airline’s responsibility. If a technical problem occurs unexpectedly, you are entitled for compensation unless it is a manufacturer’s defect. The latter is so unordinary that there is actually only 0.6% chance that manufacturer made a mistake.

“Winter conditions may be a threat to flight’s punctuality, but passengers should be aware of the exact circumstances that got their flight delayed. Too often carriers use “extraordinary circumstances” as a loophole to get out of responsibility,” says Marius Stonkus, the CEO of cancelled flight compensation company SKYCOP. “In reality a mere 30 % of all flights are halted because of bad weather. Even if the flight is delayed for more than 3 hours due to not claimable reasons, like a heavy fog, which hit all three London airports last year just few days before

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Christmas, passengers should always be catered with proper meals and water, given access to the Internet and provided an accommodation if needed to wait overnight.”

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