

LOGISTICS

Travel agents seek new air ticket compensation policy, SOPs for cancelled flights

Travel agents urge DGCA to revise flight cancellation compensation policies and streamline airport procedures for affected passengers

By BL Mumbai Bureau

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The agents have asked for a new SOP that would enable passengers to leave airport terminals quickly upon cancellation of their flights

Travel agents want Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to revise its rules regarding compensation for cancelled flights.

The agents have also asked for a new standard operating procedure (SOP) that would enable passengers to leave airport terminals quickly upon cancellation of their flights.

These demands have come as IndiGo flight cancellations grounded passengers across India. The disruption which impacted travel plans of thousands also affected hotels across country.

“In the last few days, we have seen an airline (IndiGo) cancelling more than 1,000 flights without any compensation offered. The SOP for airlines in India is to keep revising departure times of flights rather than cancelling the flight. This SOP misleads the travellers and authorities on the status designating as delayed and not cancelled and thus escaping the responsibility of compensating the traveller,” Travel Agents Federation of India president Abbas Moiz wrote to the DGCA on Monday.

Moiz said a policy must be framed for all domestic and foreign airlines to protect customers in such situations.

At present DGCA rules do provide for compensation for denied boarding and cancellations under certain conditions. In case a passenger is informed of cancellation 24 hours in advance or prior and airline must provide an alternate flight or refund. In case passenger is not provided intimation, the airline has to offer an alternate flight or provide compensation in addition to ticket refund. The compensation payable is ₹5000-10,000 or basic one way fare plus fuel surcharge, whichever is lower.

“Another, very important aspect, if the flight is cancelled, one must be able to leave the airport. There is a procedure which takes about two hours, if the traveller has not checked in baggage or it could take up to six hours, if check in baggage is also to be retrieved,” Moiz said.

He added that it is necessary to create an SOP for ingress and egress from airports in such situations. This SOP can be created by a panel with participation from various government agencies and airlines, he said.

IndiGo crisis impacts travel and hospitality sector

With holiday plans and business meets cancelled, hotels are revising their occupancy forecast for the month.

“We have seen some cancellations in the first week to the tune of around 1,600 room nights. There is a 30 per cent recovery as there were extensions by guests. We are seeing lesser impact in the past couple of days but cancellations are still trickling in. We have changed our room occupancy forecast and expect 4-5 per cent decline in December,” said Jatin Khanna, CEO, Sarovar Hotels.

Weekend gateways and resorts saw an impact as customers deferred their travel plans. The disruption of travel plans affected other players in eco-system too, like bus and taxi service providers. While the normalcy is coming back into skies, the disruption has cast fears among hotel and travel sectors about impact on Christmas and year-end travel.

Vijay Kalantri, President of All India Association of Industries said the disruption has impacted not only the movement of passengers but also has wider ramifications on the hospitality and tourism sector, which focuses on connectivity and travel experience.