

BBB: Shares tips for handling travel delays

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Milwaukee, Wis. – Flights are continuing to be canceled as airlines struggle with pandemic-related staffing woes. Thousands of flights have been affected, and there is no end in sight to the disruptions. As airlines continue to try to accommodate stranded passengers, the Better Business Bureau® (BBB®) provides guidance to travelers who may be seeking compensation and refunds for cancellations.

When a consumer is flying domestically in the United States, rules regarding flight delays and cancellations are overseen by the US Department of Transportation. In general, there are no U.S. federal laws requiring airlines to provide passengers with compensation for a delayed flight. Airlines may have their own policies and may provide better benefits if a flight was canceled or significantly delayed within the airline's scope of control. Consumers may have additional benefits if they purchased the flight with a credit card that offers additional travel protections. Check the cardholder agreement and with the airline. **Consumers should keep receipts** for extra purchases, like a hotel room, so they can submit them to their airline or credit card company for reimbursement later. Typically, nearly all domestic airlines will try to accommodate passengers on the next available flight, and sometimes on a different carrier.

When flights are canceled by the airline, consumers are always entitled to a full refund. This includes a refund of any bag fees or extras, such as additional legroom, for a seat. If the airline offers a voucher in lieu of a refund, **ask about expiration and blackout dates.** Airlines may also have additional restrictions on the use of vouchers. Consumers are not obligated to accept vouchers and may insist on a full refund instead. **If the trip was canceled by the consumer, however, they may not be entitled to a full refund.**

BBB is asking consumers to keep the following tips in mind when handling travel disruptions:

- **Check delays** – Travelers can check their latest flight information on their carrier’s website or via the airline’s telephone reservation system. Many times, delays don’t occur until the day of the flight and the airline must update its flight information within 30 minutes of receiving a notice of a status change.
- **Check carrier and credit card terms** – While federal regulations don’t require airlines to reimburse expenses such as rooms or food in the event a flight is canceled or severely delayed, the carrier and credit card companies may have different policies. Purchase tickets with a credit card that offers trip protection or travelers insurance and check individual airline policies.
- **Keep documentation** – Keep receipts and records for expenses incurred as a result of a significantly delayed or canceled flight. These may be needed later to recover expenses.
- **Check the carrier’s website** – Most airlines allow consumers to initiate refunds directly on the carrier’s website. Using a website may help a consumer obtain a refund or rebook a trip much faster than waiting for a consumer service agent in person or on the phone.
- **Rules are different for foreign flights** – Flights that were canceled while in another country will be affected by the laws of that nation. Check with the local country’s department of transportation while traveling internationally.

As the Omicron variant spreads, be wary of coronavirus cons. Read BBB’s alert about COVID-19 testing scams.

Read BBB’s tips to travel safely on your vacation.

For more information or further inquiries, contact the Wisconsin BBB at www.bbb.org/wisconsin, 414-847-6000 or 1-800-273-1002. Consumers also can find more information about how to protect themselves from scams by following the Wisconsin BBB on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.