

ABU DHABI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

# Passenger Welfare Policy

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## Document Control & Administration

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## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to establish the standards and expectations set forth by the General Civil Aviation Authority's (GCAA) and Abu Dhabi Airports (AD Airports) regarding passenger welfare during flight disruptions caused by various scenarios, including flight cancellation, flight delay (lasting up to 24 hours), diversion and significant incidents leading to airport closure or substantial reduction in capacity.

This policy outlines the specific welfare requirements that airlines are required to provide to passengers in such situations. By adhering to this policy, airlines are not only ensuring passengers' comfort, safety, and well-being but also assuming full accountability for addressing their essential needs.

This Policy shall undergo an annual review to maintain its relevance and effectiveness in addressing evolving passenger welfare concerns, and revisions may be made as needed to address emerging challenges and advancements in the aviation industry.

## 3. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to:

- (a) Commercial Air Transport Operators operating from and to airports located in the United Arab Emirates (UAE),
- (b) Commercial Air Transport Operators diverting to airports located in the UAE, and
- (c) UAE Airport Operators.

Compliance with this policy does not exempt Commercial Air Transport Operators from compliance with other international regulations that may be applicable to them.

## 4. COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

In the event of disruption, the responsible Airline is required to adhere to the following communication and information protocols:

- 3.1 Nominate an Informed Representative(s) who is trained and competent to serve as the primary point of contact for communicate with passengers and AD Airports Operations and ensure full availability at all times. The airline representative(s) shall be available at the check-in area and remain accessible throughout the period of disruption to coordinate with AD Airports Terminal Operations. Where required, they need to participate in the AUH Communication and Stakeholder Call coordinated by the AD Airports AOCC. The primary responsibilities of the Informed Representative(s) include facilitating coordination with AD Airports Terminal Operations and ensuring that accurate and up-to-date information is conveyed to passengers.
- 3.2 In the event of a flight cancellation prior to the passenger's reporting time for check-in the airline shall notify AD Airports AOCC (Airport Operations Control Centre) immediately after the decision and notify passengers within the first hour of the cancellation decisions.
- 3.3 In the event of a delay less than 2 hours, check-in shall open/close as per the published resource allocation plan. For delays, beyond 2 hours, the desk plan may be revised accordingly by the AD Airports AOCC.
- 3.4 In the event of a delay of more than 1 hour in the departure of a flight, the airline will notify their passengers within 1 hour of becoming aware of that delay, and shall provide regular updates to AD Airports and ~~GCAA OPS every hour~~.
- 3.5 Disruption details and information shall be reflected on the airline's all communication channels including but not limited to social media channels, call centre, phone calls, emails, SMS, and website whichever available.
- 3.6 The airline will provide sufficient resilient website and 24/7 rebooking telephone lines with both their main domestic language and English-speaking operators to cope with increased call volumes, activated within 1 hour of a major disruption.
- 3.7 The airline shall ensure passenger rights leaflets are provided to passengers who are at the airport at all service touchpoints including but not limited to ticketing counters, check-in area, transfer desks, and information desks. Airline should also provide clear complaint procedures to passengers.
- 3.8 The airline shall provide the passengers, GCAA consumer protection, and AD Airports Terminal Duty Managers with the 24/7 rebooking centre contact details.

Please refer to the following related AD Airports Policies with regards to Communication & Information during disruption:

- AUH Slot Adherence Policy [Insert Doc Reference Number]

- AUH Passenger Information Policy [Insert Doc Reference Number]

## 5. PROVISION OF SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS

- 4.1 Priority shall be given during the whole period of disruption to vulnerable passengers including but not limited to passengers with reduced mobility, special needs, unaccompanied children, senior citizens, pregnant women, and families with young children.
- 4.2 Check-in desks and transfer desks shall be manned adequately to ensure full support is provided to passengers during the rebooking, cancellations, and refund request process. The airline and/or the ground handler shall rebook the next available flight to be as convenient as possible at the wish of passenger.
- 4.3 The airline and/or ground handler shall provide the passengers with appropriate means of communication, meals and refreshments without additional cost to the passengers, and in a reasonable relation to their waiting time, in the event of:
  1. terminal/tarmac delay beyond 3 hours from schedule time of departure,
  2. flight cancellation,
  3. flight diversion, or
  4. denied boarding
- 4.4 If the delay beyond 3 hours (as specified above) is known to the airline at the time the passenger checks in or bag drops at the airport Airlines shall provide this sustenance at that point.
- 4.5 The airline/ground handler where possible should encourage passengers to return home/the place of accommodation if the passengers are originating from the city of residence / domicile.
- 4.6 The airline/ground handler shall provide hotel accommodation to passengers and transport between the airport and place of accommodation, without additional cost to the passengers, in the event of:
  1. terminal delay beyond 3 hours from schedule time of departure if the passengers missed their connection and the next probable connection is after 8 hours,
  2. terminal delay beyond 8 hours from schedule time of departure,
  3. tarmac delay for more than 3 hours from schedule time of departure if the connection flight is missed,
  4. flight cancellation,
  5. flight diversion, or
  6. denied boarding
- 4.7 The airline/ground handler shall provide the affected passengers with options for a return flight to the first point of departure or re-routing to their final destination, without additional cost to the passengers, in the event of flight diversion or denied boarding (except for the passenger does not comply fully with the carrier's contract of carriage or tariff provisions regarding ticketing, reconfirmation, check-in, and acceptability for transportation).
- 4.8 In the event of flight cancellation regardless of whether checked-in or not (only applicable to transit flights and flights not originating from the city of residence/domicile of the passenger), the airline/ground handler should carry the passengers along with their baggage as soon as practicable on another flight on which space is available, and extend the period of validity of their ticket to cover that carriage where necessary. In addition, the airline/ground handler should provide an option for a return flight to the first point of departure or re-routing within a reasonable period of time on a flight of another airline, or by other mutually agreed means and class of carriage.
- 4.9 In the event of anticipated tarmac delay beyond 3 hours from schedule time of departure, the airline/ground handler should offer the possibility/opportunity to disembark from the aircraft (subject to local regulations).
- 4.10 Maximum hold onboard an aircraft at AUH is 3 hours in absence of disembarking decision. Note: We should specify if this is the same at other AD Airports –e.g., Maximum hold onboard an aircraft at AAN is 3 hours in absence of disembarking decision & Other Airports
- 4.11 In the event of a flight delay of more than 8 hours from schedule time of departure, flight diversion, or flight cancellation; the Airport Operator, in coordination with the airline/ground handler, and the concerned authorities, should establish measures to facilitate:
  - (a) entry for the purpose of temporary stay, of transit passengers or passengers from diverted flights; who do not have the required visa prior to arrival;

(b) the departure or transit through the state territory for passengers with valid travel reservations, if their visas expire due to delays or cancellations of flights.

(c) the passage of passengers with valid passports through any of the Emirates even if the visa has been issued by another Emirate, as applicable.

4.12 Airport operator (AD Airports) reserves the right to provide assistance to passengers directly if the affected airline/ground handler does not comply with the above minimum standards, all costs incurred by us shall be fully charged back to the defaulting airline and payable on demand.

## 6. KEY CONTACTS

Contact Role	Contact Details
AD Airports Airport Operations Control Centre (AOCC)	Phone TBC   Email TBC
AD Airports Terminal Duty Manager	Phone TBC   Email TBC
Etihad Airport Services	Phone TBC   Email TBC
Airline Relations	Phone TBC   Email TBC
GCAA Aviation Consumer Protection Unit	Phone TBC   Email TBC

## 7. DEFINITIONS

In this Protocol the following terms shall have the following meanings:

**Airlines** mean the operators of aircraft using Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH);

**Airport Operator** means a person, organisation or enterprise engaged in the operation of an airport.

**AUH Communication and Stakeholder Call** means the regular airline stakeholder telephone conference calls scheduled by AOCC during disruptions; (AUH ATM Demand and Capacity Balance)

**Cancellation** means the non-operation of a flight which was previously planned and on which at least one place was reserved. For the purpose of this requirement; a passenger shall be eligible for welfare/compensation if the flight is cancelled within 48 hours from the scheduled time of departure (STD).

**Delay** is when a specific flight departs or arrives later than its scheduled time.

Denied boarding – means a refusal to carry passengers on a flight, although they have presented themselves for boarding, except where the passenger does not comply fully with the carrier’s contract of carriage or tariff provisions regarding ticketing, reconfirmation, check-in, and acceptability for transportation.

**Diversions** means a flight that has been routed from its original arrival destination to a new, typically temporary, arrival destination

**Final destination** means the destination on the ticket presented at the check-in counter or, in the case of directly connecting flights, the destination of the last flight; alternative connecting flights available shall not be taken into account if the original planned arrival time is respected.

**Passenger** means any person other than the crew members who have been or will be transported on board an aircraft under the ticket issued.

**Passenger Welfare Program** means a program developed and implemented by an air carrier and an airport in accordance with the requirements of the competent authority, containing all measures and procedures to deal with the welfare of passengers in airplanes and airports following a disruption, in coordination with all concerned entities.

**Informed Representative** means a designated person based at AUH authorised to take decisions on behalf of the airline;

**Notify** means provide appropriate information by SMS text message, email and/or telephone;

**Transit flights** means a flight that requires passengers to change from one aircraft to another at a hub airport on their way to their final destination. It should be noted that according to the official definition of some airlines transit passengers are on a connecting flight that carry the same flight number.

**Vulnerable Passengers** means passengers with disabilities, elderly passengers, unaccompanied minors and families with young children;

**Website** means main airline website and any associated websites such as online booking facilities; and

**Sufficient resilience** means demonstrating sufficient resilience to support their AUH operations during periods of significant disruption e.g. 40-50 times normal daily traffic, with load testing every six months or procedures in place to offer a reduced service.

**Welfare** – means the general health, happiness and safety of a person, an animal or a group.

## 8. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The GCAA shall be responsible for the continuous oversight over the Airport and Commercial Air Transport Operator's Passenger Welfare Program. AD Airports (as Airport Operator) do not assume/bear any legal liability for any dispute between airline, ground handler, and passengers. However, airport operator (AD Airports) reserves the right to provide assistance to passengers directly if the affected airline/ground handler does not comply with the above minimum standards, all costs incurred by us shall be fully charged back to the defaulting airline and payable on demand.

## 9. RESPONSIBILITY OF APPLICATION:

To ensure effective implementation and adherence to this Communication and Information Policy, the following responsibilities have been assigned:

### 8.1 Airline Representatives:

Airline representatives, also referred to as Informed Representatives, are responsible for the direct communication and coordination with passengers, AD Airports Operations, and other stakeholders during disruptions. They are accountable for providing accurate and timely information, ensuring passengers' needs are met, and coordinating with AD Airports Terminal Operations and AOCC as necessary.

### 8.2. AD Airports Airport Operations Control Centre (AOCC):

The AOCC is responsible for facilitating communication between airlines, stakeholders, and AD Airports during disruptions. They will ensure that nominated airline representatives are available and informed, and they will coordinate AUH Communication and Stakeholder Calls. AOCC will support the airlines in their communication efforts.

### 8.3. Airlines:

Airlines are responsible for notifying AD Airports AOCC promptly about flight cancellations, delays, or disruptions. They must ensure that passengers are informed within specified time frames and that updates are provided regularly. Airlines are also accountable for adhering to the policy's provisions related to communication, support, and passenger welfare.

### 8.4. GCAA Aviation Consumer Protection Unit:

The GCAA Aviation Consumer Protection Unit plays a role in addressing passenger concerns and ensuring compliance with passenger welfare standards. They should be accessible to passengers and will work with airlines and AD Airports to ensure that passenger rights are upheld.

### 8.5. AD Airports Terminal Duty Manager:

The AD Airports Terminal Duty Manager is responsible for providing on-ground support to passengers and coordinating with airlines to address disruption-related issues. They will collaborate with airlines to ensure that support requirements, such as meals and accommodation, are met promptly.

### 8.6. All Personnel:

All personnel within airlines, AD Airports, and other stakeholders are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the policy's provisions relevant to their roles and ensuring compliance.