

TITLE 14--AERONAUTICS AND SPACE

CHAPTER II--OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

PART 250 OVERSALES

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Authority: 49 U.S.C. chapters 401, 411, 413, 417.

Source: ER-1306, 47 FR 52985, Nov. 24, 1982, unless otherwise noted.

Sec. 250.1 Definitions.

Airport means the airport at which the direct or connecting flight, on which the passenger holds confirmed reserved space, is planned to arrive or some other airport serving the same metropolitan area, provided that transportation to the other airport is accepted (i.e., used) by the passenger.

Carrier means (a) a direct air carrier, except a helicopter operator, holding a certificate issued by the Department of Transportation pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 41102 or that has been found fit to conduct commuter operations under 49 U.S.C. § 41738, or an exemption from 49 U.S.C. § 41102, authorizing the scheduled transportation of persons; or (b) a foreign air carrier holding a permit issued by the Department pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 41302, or an exemption from that provision, authorizing the scheduled foreign air transportation of persons.

Comparable air transportation means transportation provided to passengers at no extra cost by a carrier as defined above.

Confirmed reserved space, means space on a specific date and on a specific flight and class of service of a carrier which has been requested by a passenger and which the carrier or its agent

has verified, by appropriate notation on the ticket or in any other manner provided therefor by the carrier, as being reserved for the accommodation of the passenger.

Stopover means a deliberate interruption of a journey by the passenger, scheduled to exceed 4 hours, at a point between the place of departure and the final destination.

Sum of the values of the remaining flight coupons means the sum of the applicable one-way fares, including any surcharges and air transportation taxes, less any applicable discounts.

[ER-1306, 47 FR 52985, Nov. 24, 1982, as amended by ER-1337, 48 FR 29680, June 28, 1983; 68 FR 52836, Sept. 8, 2003; 73 FR 21026, April 18, 2008]

Sec. 250.2 Applicability.

This part applies to every carrier, as defined in § 250.1, with respect to scheduled flight segments using an aircraft that has a designed passenger capacity of 30 or more passenger seats, operating in (1) interstate air transportation or (2) foreign air transportation with respect to nonstop flight segments originating at a point within the United States.

[ER-1306, 47 FR 52985, Nov. 24, 1982, as amended at 68 FR 52836, Sept. 8, 2003; 73 FR 21026, April 18, 2008]

Sec. 250.2a Policy regarding denied boarding.

In the event of an oversold flight, every carrier shall ensure that the smallest practicable number of persons holding confirmed reserved space on that flight are denied boarding involuntarily.

Sec. 250.2b Carriers to request volunteers for denied boarding.

(a) In the event of an oversold flight, every carrier shall request volunteers for denied boarding before using any other boarding priority. A "volunteer" is a person who responds to the carrier's request for volunteers and who willingly accepts the carriers' offer of compensation, in any amount, in exchange for relinquishing the confirmed reserved space. Any other passenger denied boarding is considered for purposes of this part to have been denied boarding involuntarily, even if that passenger accepts the denied boarding compensation.

(b) Every carrier shall advise each passenger solicited to volunteer for denied boarding, no later than the time the carrier solicits that passenger to volunteer, whether he or she is in danger of being involuntarily denied boarding and, if so, the compensation the carrier is obligated to pay if the passenger is involuntarily denied boarding. If an insufficient number of volunteers comes forward, the carrier may deny boarding to other passengers in accordance with its boarding priority rules.

[ER-1337, 48 FR 29680, June 28, 1983, as amended at 68 FR 52836, Sept. 8, 2003; 73 FR 21026, April 18, 2008]

Sec. 250.3 Boarding priority rules.

(a) Every carrier shall establish priority rules and criteria for determining which passengers holding confirmed reserved space shall be denied boarding on an oversold flight in the event that an insufficient number of volunteers come forward. Such rules and criteria shall reflect the obligations of the carrier set forth in Sec. Sec. 250.2a and 250.2b to minimize involuntary denied boarding and to request volunteers, and shall be written in such manner as to be understandable and meaningful to the average passenger. Such rules and criteria shall not make, give, or cause any undue or unreasonable preference or advantage to any particular person or subject any particular person to any unjust or unreasonable prejudice or disadvantage in any respect whatsoever.

(b) Boarding priority factors may include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) a passenger's time of check-in; (2) whether a passenger has a seat assignment before reaching the departure gate for carriers that assign seats; (3) the fare paid by a passenger; (4) a passenger's frequent-flyer status; and (5) a passenger's disability or status as an unaccompanied minor.

[ER-1306, 47 FR 52985, Nov. 24, 1982, as amended by ER-1337, 48 FR 29680, June 28, 1983; 73 FR 21026, April 18, 2008]

Sec. 250.5 Amount of denied boarding compensation for passengers denied boarding involuntarily.

(a) Subject to the exceptions provided in § 250.6, a carrier to whom this part applies as described in § 250.2 shall pay compensation to passengers denied boarding involuntarily from an oversold flight at the rate of 200 percent of the fare (including any surcharges and air transportation taxes) to the passenger's next stopover, or if none, to the passenger's final destination, with a maximum of \$800. However, the compensation shall be one-half the amount described above, with a \$400 maximum, if the carrier arranges for comparable air transportation [see section 250.1], or other transportation used by the passenger that, at the time either such arrangement is made, is planned to arrive at the airport of the passenger's next stopover, or if none, the airport of the passenger's final destination, not later than 2 hours after the time the direct or connecting flight from which the passenger was denied boarding is planned to arrive in the case of interstate air transportation, or 4 hours after such time in the case of foreign air transportation.

(b) Carriers may offer free or reduced rate air transportation in lieu of the cash due under paragraph (a) of this section, if (1) the value of the transportation benefit offered is equal to or greater than the cash payment otherwise required, and (2) the carrier informs the passenger of the amount of cash compensation that would otherwise be due and that the passenger may decline the transportation benefit and receive the cash payment.

[ER-1337, 48 FR 29680, June 28, 1983, as amended at 68 FR 52836, Sept. 8, 2003; 73 FR 21026, April 18, 2008]

Sec. 250.6 Exceptions to eligibility for denied boarding compensation.

A passenger denied boarding involuntarily from an oversold flight shall not be eligible for denied boarding compensation if:

(a) 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;

(b) The flight for which the passenger holds confirmed reserved space is unable to accommodate that passenger because of substitution of equipment of lesser capacity when required by operational or safety reasons; or, on an aircraft with a designed passenger capacity of 60 or fewer seats, the flight for which the passenger holds confirmed reserved space is unable to accommodate that passenger due to weight/balance restrictions when required by operational or safety reasons;

(c) The passenger is offered accommodations or is seated in a section of the aircraft other than that specified on the ticket at no extra charge, except that a passenger seated in a section for which a lower fare is charged shall be entitled to an appropriate refund; or

(d) The carrier arranges comparable air transportation, or other transportation used by the passenger at no extra cost to the passenger, that at the time such arrangements are made is planned to arrive at the airport of the passenger's next stopover or, if none, at the airport of the final destination not later than 1 hour after the planned arrival time of the passenger's original flight or flights.

[ER-1337, 48 FR 29680, June 28, 1983; 73 FR 21026, April 18, 2008]

Sec. 250.7 [Reserved]

Sec. 250.8 Denied boarding compensation.

(a) Every carrier shall tender to a passenger eligible for denied boarding compensation, on the day and place the denied boarding occurs, except as provided in paragraph (b), cash or an immediately negotiable check for the appropriate amount of compensation provided in Sec. 250.5.

(b) Where a carrier arranges, for the passenger's convenience, alternate means of transportation that departs before the payment can be prepared and given to the passenger, tender shall be made by mail or other means within 24 hours after the time the denied boarding occurs.

[ER-1394, 49 FR 43625, Oct. 31, 1984]

Sec. 250.9 Written explanation of denied boarding compensation and boarding priorities.

(a) Every carrier shall furnish passengers who are denied boarding involuntarily from flights on which they hold confirmed reserved space immediately after the denied boarding occurs, a written statement explaining the terms, conditions, and limitations of denied boarding

compensation, and describing the carriers' boarding priority rules and criteria. The carrier shall also furnish the statement to any person upon request at all airport ticket selling positions which are in the charge of a person employed exclusively by the carrier, or by it jointly with another person or persons, and at all boarding locations being used by the carrier.

(b) The statement shall read as follows:

COMPENSATION FOR DENIED BOARDING

If you have been denied a reserved seat on (name of air carrier), you are probably entitled to monetary compensation. This notice explains the airline's obligation and the passenger's rights in the case of an oversold flight, in accordance with regulations of the *U.S. Department of Transportation*.

VOLUNTEERS AND BOARDING PRIORITIES

If a flight is oversold (more passengers hold confirmed reservations than there are seats available), no one may be denied boarding against his or her will until airline personnel first ask for volunteers who will give up their reservation willingly, in exchange for a payment of the airline's choosing. If there are not enough volunteers, other passengers may be denied boarding involuntarily in accordance with the following boarding priority of (name of air carrier): (In this space the carrier inserts its boarding priority rules or a summary thereof, in a manner to be understandable to the average passenger.)

COMPENSATION FOR INVOLUNTARY DENIED BOARDING

If you are denied boarding involuntarily, you are entitled to a payment of "denied boarding compensation" from the airline unless: (1) you have not fully complied with the airline's ticketing, check-in and reconfirmation requirements, or you are not acceptable for transportation under the airline's usual rules and practices; or (2) you are denied boarding because the flight is canceled; or (3) you are denied boarding because a smaller capacity aircraft was substituted for safety or operational reasons; or (4) on a flight operated with an aircraft having 60 or fewer seats, you are denied boarding due to safety-related weight/balance restrictions that limit payload; or (5) you are offered accommodations in a section of the aircraft other than specified in your ticket, at no extra charge (a passenger seated in a section for which a lower fare is charged must be given an appropriate refund); or (6) the airline is able to place you on another flight or flights that are planned to reach your next stopover or final destination within one hour of the planned arrival time of your original flight.

AMOUNT OF DENIED BOARDING COMPENSATION

Passengers who are eligible for denied boarding compensation must be offered a payment equal to their one-way fare to their destination (including connecting flights) or first stopover of four hours or longer, with a \$400 maximum. However, if the airline cannot arrange "alternate transportation" (see below) for the passenger, the compensation is doubled (\$800 maximum). The fare upon which the compensation is based shall include any surcharge and air transportation tax.

"Alternate transportation" is air transportation (by any airline licensed by *DOT*) or other transportation used by the passenger which, at the time the arrangement is made, is planned to arrive at the passenger's next scheduled stopover of 4 hours or longer or, if none, the passenger's final destination, no later than 2 hours (for flights between U.S. points, including territories and possessions) or 4 hours (for international flights) after the passenger's originally scheduled arrival time.

METHOD OF PAYMENT

Except as provided below, the airline must give each passenger who qualified for involuntary denied boarding compensation a payment by cash or check for the amount specified above, on the day and at the place the involuntary denied boarding occurs. If the airline arranges alternate transportation for the passenger's convenience that departs before the payment can be made, the payment shall be sent to the passenger within 24 hours. The air carrier may offer free or discounted transportation in place of the cash payment. In that event, the carrier must disclose all material restrictions on the use of the free or discounted transportation before the passenger decides whether to accept the transportation in lieu of a cash or check payment. The passenger may insist on the cash/check payment or refuse all compensation and bring private legal action.

PASSENGER'S OPTIONS

Acceptance of the compensation may relieve (name of air carrier) from any further liability to the passenger caused by its failure to honor the confirmed reservation. However, the passenger may decline the payment and seek to recover damages in a court of law or in some other manner.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 3024-0003)

[ER-1306, 47 FR 52985, Nov. 24, 1982, as amended by ER-1337, 48 FR 29681, June 28, 1983; ER-1392, 49 FR 40401, Oct. 16, 1984; ER-1394, 49 FR 43625, Oct. 31, 1984; 68 FR 52836, Sept. 8, 2003; 73 FR 21026, April 18, 2008]

Sec. 250.10 Report of passengers denied confirmed space.

Every reporting carrier as defined in 14 CFR 234.2 and any carrier that voluntarily submits data pursuant to section 234.7 of that part shall file, on a quarterly basis, the information specified in BTS Form 251. The reporting basis shall be flights originating or terminating at, or servicing, a point within the United States. The reports are to be submitted within 30 days after the quarter covered by the report. The calendar quarters end March 31, June 30, September 30 and December 31. ``Total Boardings'' on line 7 of Form 251 shall include only passengers on flights for which confirmed reservations are offered. No reports need be filed for inbound international flights on which the protections of this part do not apply.

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[Doc. No. 43872, 51 FR 30475, Aug. 27, 1986, as amended at 60 FR 66726, Dec. 26, 1995; 73 FR 21026, April 18, 2008]

Sec. 250.11 Public disclosure of deliberate overbooking and boarding procedures.

(a) Every carrier shall cause to be displayed continuously in a conspicuous public place at each desk, station and position in the United States which is in the charge of a person employed exclusively by it, or by it jointly with another person, or by any agent employed by such air carrier or foreign air carrier to sell tickets to passengers, a sign located so as to be clearly visible

and clearly readable to the traveling public, which shall have printed thereon the following statement in boldface type at least one-fourth of an inch high:

NOTICE—OVERBOOKING OF FLIGHTS

Airline flights may be overbooked, and there is a slight chance that a seat will not be available on a flight for which a person has a confirmed reservation. If the flight is overbooked, no one will be denied a seat until airline personnel first ask for volunteers willing to give up their reservation in exchange for compensation of the airline's choosing. If there are not enough volunteers, the airline will deny boarding to other persons in accordance with its particular boarding priority. With few exceptions, including failure to comply with the carrier's check-in deadline (carrier shall insert either "of ___ minutes prior to each flight segment" or "(which are available upon request from the air carrier)" here), persons denied boarding involuntarily are entitled to compensation. The complete rules for the payment of compensation and each airline's boarding priorities are available at all airport ticket counters and boarding locations. Some airlines do not apply these consumer protections to travel from some foreign countries, although other consumer protections may be available. Check with your airline or your travel agent.

(b) Every carrier shall include with each ticket sold in the United States the notices set forth in paragraph (a) of this section, printed in at least 12-point type. The notice may be printed on a separate piece of paper, on the ticket stock, or on the ticket envelope. The last two sentences of the notice shall be printed in a type face contrasting with that of the rest of the notice.

(c) It shall be the responsibility of each carrier to ensure that travel agents authorized to sell air transportation for that carrier comply with the notice provisions of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section.

(d) [Reserved]

(e) Any air carrier or foreign air carrier engaged in foreign air transportation that complies fully with this part for inbound traffic to the United States need not use the last two sentences of the notices required by paragraph (a) of this subsection.

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[ER-1306, 47 FR 52985, Nov. 24, 1982, as amended by ER-1392, 49 FR 40401, Oct. 16, 1984; 73 FR 21026, April 18, 2008]