Web FAQs – COVID-19 Pandemic

**Q1. I cancelled my flight reservation because of COVID-19 – does the airline have to refund my ticket?**

The *Air Passenger Protection Regulations* (APPR)do not address situations where a passenger cancels their travel. In these cases, the airline must follow the policies set out in their tariff and fare rules. Contact your airline for more information.

**Q2. The airline cancelled my flight because of COVID-19 – does the airline have to refund my ticket?**

The CTA anticipates that most flight disruptions related to COVID-19 will be outside the airline's control. In these cases, the *Air Passenger Protection Regulations* only require that the airline ensure passengers complete their itineraries by rebooking them on the next available flight operated by them or a partner airline. However, an airline is not expected to rebook a passenger if they have completed their trip (including by a repatriation flight).

Some airlines' tariffs provide for refunds in certain cases, but may have clauses that airlines believe relieve them of such obligations in *force majeure* situations.

The legislation, regulations and tariffs were not developed in anticipation of extraordinary circumstances such as these. While each case would need to be assessed on its merits, the CTA believes that refunds to passengers whose flights are cancelled in the form of vouchers or credits for future travel could be appropriate, as long as these vouchers or credits do not expire in an unreasonably short period of time.

This strikes a fair and sensible balance between passenger protection and airlines' operational realities in these extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances.

**Q3. It does not seem fair to passengers who lost money that they would only get credits or vouchers. Can you explain?**

The CTA believes that fair and robust air protection for passengers whose flights are cancelled in these circumstances is essential. That is why the CTA has issued a statement (insert link) indicating that providing vouchers or credits to passengers in these extraordinary circumstances may be appropriate. This measure provides a clear signal on the carrier's obligations in situations outside of their control under the *Air Passenger Protection Regulations* – which simply require the completion of the passenger's itinerary, when this may no longer be possible in today's environment – and, in some cases, goes beyond what carriers are to provide under their tariffs.

The legislation, regulations, and tariffs were developed in anticipation of relatively localized and short-term disruptions. None contemplated the sorts of worldwide mass flight cancellations that have taken place over recent weeks as a result of the pandemic.

The issuance of vouchers or credits strikes a fair and sensible balance between passenger protection and airlines' operational realities in these extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances. It is important that passengers not suffer out of pocket, and also that the air industry survive and can continue to provide diverse service offerings to Canadians once the crisis has abated.

**Q4. I am a Canadian trying to return home from abroad. Can the Government of Canada help cover costs?**

The Government of Canada has announced the creation of the [COVID-19 Emergency Loan Program](https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-info/financial-assistance/covid-19-financial-help) to provide financial help for Canadians outside Canada.

**Q5. How do the *Air Passenger Protection Regulations* (APPR) apply to flight delays or cancellations during this pandemic?**

In the event of a flight delay or cancellation, airlines must always keep passengers informed of their rights and the cause of a flight disruption.

We anticipate that most flight disruptions related to COVID-19 will be outside the airline's control. In these cases, airlines must make sure the passengers reach their destinations (re-booking them on other flights), but the regulations do not require that airlines provide standards of treatment or compensation.

In the current circumstances, airlines do not have to follow APPR requirements to rebook passengers using an airline with which they have no commercial agreement.

For more information, visit [Important Information for Travellers During COVID-19](https://otc-cta.gc.ca/eng/important-information-travellers-during-covid-19).

Refunds to passengers for cancelled flights, in the form of travel credits or vouchers, may also be appropriate. For more information, please see the CTA's statement insert link)

**Q6. I've made a claim for compensation with an airline – don't they have to respond within 30 days?**

In the context of the significant declines in passenger volumes and disruptions to airline operations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and to allow airlines to continue focusing on immediate and urgent operational demands, including bringing Canadians home from abroad, the airlines are temporarily exempted from the obligation to respond to claims for compensation in 30-days. This will remain valid until June 30, 2020 or any further date that the CTA may order. After that, the airline will have 120 days to respond to the claims received during that time.

**Q7. I filed an air travel complaint with the CTa. Will it still be processed during the pandemic period?**

During these difficult times, the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) continues to maintain its normal operations while our employees practice social distancing. Our dedicated employees are working remotely and are available through electronic means to provide service. You can continue to request CTA services, file applications, and do normal business with us through our normal channels.

Please note, however, that the CTA has temporarily paused all dispute resolution activities involving air carriers until June 30, 2020, to permit them to focus on immediate and urgent operational demands. While ~~you~~ passengers can continue to file air ~~passenger~~ travel complaints with us and all complaints will be processed in due course, we may not be able to respond quickly. On or before June 30, 2020, the Agency will determine if the pause should end on that date or be extended to a later date.

|  |
| --- |
| **Q8. An airline just suspended their services in my region. Don't airlines have to provide a notice of 120 days before eliminating a service?**The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is significant and continues to evolve as air carriers try to adjust to travel restrictions and rapidly dropping passenger volumes and revenues. Given these circumstances, the CTA has exempted all airlines from the normal 120 day notice requirement when temporarily reducing or suspending domestic air services until June 30, 2020. Once the exemption ends, airlines will be required to immediately resume those services. Services cannot be reduced or discontinued on a permanent basis unless the normal requirements for notice and consultation are followed.If the CTA finds that the suspension of service on a certain route has caused or is likely to cause a community to become so isolated that it does not have access to critical services and goods, the CTA may lift the exemption. In this case, service would have to resume and the carrier providing the service would have to follow the normal advance notice requirements before suspending it. |