

[DOT Rule finalized to protect airline passengers](#)

Last week, the U.S. Department of Transportation finalized a regulation on airline ticket refunds and consumer protections. First proposed in August 2022, the rule prohibits U.S.-based air carriers, international air carriers, and ticket agents from engaging in unfair sales practices and requires them to provide requested refunds to passengers in certain situations concerning flights to, from, and within the U.S. Some of these instances include:

- **Canceled flights and flights with significantly changed itineraries**

This rule applies when any domestic flights change the itinerary to depart three hours earlier or later, and when international flights change to depart six hours earlier or later; when the departure or destination location is changed; when an alternative flight possesses more connection points than the original itinerary or if a passenger is downgraded to a lower class or service; and when a passenger with disabilities is scheduled to travel through a different connecting airport than originally planned or is rescheduled to travel on a substitute aircraft that does not possess adequate accessibility features.

- **Significantly delayed or lost bags and ancillary services not provided**

The rule requires air carriers to provide a refunding of baggage fees if luggage is delayed for at least 12 hours on domestic flights, 15 hours for international flights under 12 hours, and 30 hours for international flights over 12 hours. The rule also applies when a carrier cannot provide an ancillary service (an entertainment system, for example) for which the passenger paid.

- **Passengers affected by a serious communicable disease**

The regulation requires airlines to provide travel credits or vouchers for any ticket bought before a government-announced public health emergency or a consumer reasonably knew that they may have contracted a serious communicable disease. It allows airlines to require medical documentation from passengers claiming refunds.

The final rule can be found at [transportation.gov/airconsumer/latest-news](https://www.transportation.gov/airconsumer/latest-news) and at [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov), docket number DOT-OST-2022-0089. The regulations are phased in over several months and have different implementation periods, ranging from six to 12 months.

[transportation.gov](https://www.transportation.gov)