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## New Airline Passenger Protections Take Effect This Week

New regulations going into effect this week will help ensure that consumers are treated fairly when they travel by air, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood said today. Among the new provisions, part of the airline consumer rule issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation in April 2011, are requirements that airlines and ticket agents include all mandatory taxes and fees in published airfares and that they disclose baggage fees to consumers buying tickets.

"Airline passengers have rights, and they should be able to expect fair and reasonable treatment when booking a trip and when they fly," U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood said. "The new passenger protections taking effect this week are a continuation of our effort to help air travelers receive the respect they deserve."

Also beginning this week, passengers will be able to hold a reservation without payment, or cancel a booking without penalty, for 24 hours after the reservation is made, if they make the reservation one week or more prior to a flight's departure date. In addition, airlines will be required to promptly notify passengers of flight delays of over 30 minutes, as well as flight cancellations and diversions, and they will generally be prohibited from increasing the price of passengers' ticket after it is bought.

The new rules also will make it easier for passengers to determine the full price they will have to pay for air transportation prior to travel. Currently, airlines and ticket agents are allowed to publish ads that list government-imposed taxes and fees separately from the advertised fare, as long as these taxes and fees are assessed on a per-passenger basis. However, sometimes the notice of these taxes and fees is not obvious to consumers. Under the new requirements, all mandatory taxes and fees must be included together in the advertised fare. The advertising provision takes effect Jan. 26, 2012 while all of the other consumer protections go into effect on Jan. 24 of this year.

In addition, airlines and ticket agents will be required to disclose baggage fees to consumers when they book a flight online. The first screen containing a fare quotation for a specific itinerary must show if there will be additional baggage fees, and inform consumers where they can go to see these fees. Information on baggage fees also must be included on all e-ticket confirmations, and for most trips the same baggage allowances and fees must apply throughout a passenger's journey.

The new requirements are the final provisions to become effective from the Department's most recent airline consumer rule. A number of new measures required by the rule took effect on Aug. 23, 2011, including requirements that airlines refund baggage fees if bags are lost and provide increased compensation to passengers bumped from oversold flights.

Also beginning last August, the Department set a four-hour time limit on tarmac delays for all international flights at U.S. airports, and extended the three-hour tarmac delay limit for domestic flights to smaller airports. It also required additional airlines to report their lengthy tarmac delays to DOT.

The Department is looking at other airline consumer protection measures for a possible future rulemaking, including requiring that all airline optional fees be disclosed wherever consumers can book a flight, strengthening disclosure of code-share flights, and requiring additional carriers to file on-time performance reports.

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Contact: Bill Mosley • Tel: (202) 366-5582



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[U.S. Department of Transportation](#) | 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE | Washington, DC 20590 | 202-366-4000