

PREPARE PLAN B TO SAVE TIME, EFFORT

# How to cope if your flight is canceled

BY SAMANTHA BOMKAMP  
Associated Press

**Q.** In light of how the airlines are cutting back their schedules this fall, what can I do — and what recourse do I have — if my flight is canceled?

**A.** As airlines look to cut capacity, a lot are rescheduling passengers on other flights — but some aren't advising passengers of the changes ahead of time, according to Anne Banas, executive editor of [www.SmarterTravel.com](http://www.SmarterTravel.com).

But before you even get to the airport, there are several things you can do to prevent a potentially messy experience.

Banas recommends signing up for alerts through your airline or a booking Web site (such as Orbitz, Travelocity or Expedia) to keep you informed about your flight and any changes. These alerts, which

can be directed to an e-mail address, cell phone or PDA, are especially important as your flight time approaches, Banas said.

If your flight is canceled completely for a reason within the airline's control (read: not weather), Banas suggests being prepared with some information that can get you on another flight as soon as possible.

First, take a look at flights leaving around the time of your departed flight. It'll save you time and effort at the airport if your flight gets canceled, and will give you a leg up when negotiating for a change to your ticket.

She also recommends printing out the airlines' "Contract of Carriage" before you arrive at the airport. This contract will spell out what your rights are in the event of a canceled flight.

Although each airline has a slightly different contract of carriage, most airlines will rebook you on a flight within four hours of the original flight. If the airline can't rebook you within that time, you can ask for a hotel voucher. Food vouchers are also negotiable.

When you get word of that canceled flight, Banas recommends calling the airline right away. Standing in the customer service line with hundreds of other passengers will likely cause you more headaches and might not get you the speedy change you would like. Instead, Banas suggests doing both: Dial the airline on your cell phone while you're standing in the customer service line.

While it is in the airline's best interest to book you on another flight with them, as opposed to a competing carrier, you still can ask to be redirect-

ed on another carrier. Having the flight number, destination and time of similar flights will come in handy.

For a weather-related cancellation, the same procedure applies, with a little less flexibility in some cases.

Banas noted that recent cancellations because of Hurricane Gustav "set a precedent" that airlines are willing to rebook a flight for free if there is a weather-related delay. While most ticket change fees will be waived if travelers choose to take another flight, Banas said changes in destinations (flying into a neighboring city, for example) will likely result in a charge.

Also, changes to a ticket can only be made once in most cases, so be sure of your itinerary before making the switch to avoid extra fees.

## Airlines

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policies aimed at putting more employees on these flights.

Ken Morrison, an aerospace engineer in Manassas, Va., says his company sometimes points its traveling employees to connecting flights.

"If you can get to your destination within two hours of the non-stop, and there is a considerable price differential," he says, "then you may be asked to take the connecting flights."

Many companies require employees "to take the lowest logical fare" but don't want them on a connecting flight that adds more than two hours of travel time, says Susan Gurley, executive director of the Association of Corporate Travel Executives. The group represents 2,500 travel managers and suppliers.

Increasing the number of connecting flights to save money "can be highly counterproductive," Gurley says. There's a greater chance of flight cancellations and delays, and, "Travel managers agree that what you could save on airfares, you lose in productivity waiting in airports."

Kevin Maguire, president of the National Business Travel Association, says some companies "steer employees to the lowest logical non-stop fare" and give rewards to employees who select cheaper connecting flights. Some other companies "push employees to the lowest fare, including both non-stop and connecting options," but allow employees, with company approval, to choose a more expensive flight.

The savings offered by connecting flights means little to Jerry Green, a cargo security consultant in Maryville, Tenn., who takes more than 140 business trips each year.

Green says he stopped taking connecting flights three years ago, and he keeps track of his flights' on-time performance. Since abandoning connections, his flights' on-time rate has improved from 71 percent to 82 percent, he says.

"Delays have become so prevalent that I look at a connection as doubling the chance of a big delay," Green says. "I am flying on more non-stop flights than ever, regardless of price."

## Water

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and beverages worldwide. He was also a senior executive for domestic and international marketing and sales with Arlon, DEP Corp. and Marion Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals.

Sparks was president and chief executive officer of The Beverage Group, a startup company marketing premium bottled water, new age and functional beverage brands. Before that, he was a senior executive with several major bottled water and beverage companies.

Hawaii exported more than 19 tons of desalinated drinking water to Japan and other countries in the first three months of this year as the market for deep-sea water from Hawaii continued to grow.

Figures released in May by Foreign Trade Zone No. 9 showed about a 16 percent increase in exports of the water overseas during the first quarter, with more than 38,000 pounds shipped internationally.

Hawaii's deep-sea water business sprang up about five years ago and has for the most part enjoyed rapid growth as consumers in Asia seek out the drink, mar-



Pure Pacific International

Big Island-based Pure Pacific International is producing two kinds of bottled water: aloha pure and aloha deep, in various size bottles.

ked as a natural, pathogen-free product drawn from thousands of feet below the ocean's surface. The Foreign Trade Zone statistics show total export sales of the water rose to \$41.7 million last year, while first-quarter revenue totaled \$9.69 million.

Ganaden said his company has signed a distribution contract with ITO EN USA that is expected to deliver the new water to stores, including Safeway, Foodland, Food Pantry and ABC Stores.

Ken Niimura, of ITO EN, said the new waters fit well with his company, which is known for its natural ready-to-drink green tea beverages.

"We are very excited about this new product that will expand the offerings of ITO EN to popular drinking water products," Niimura said.

"We see the attractive benefits of supplying public demand for water that retains a dense mineral content," he said, along with added appeal as a product

unique to Hawaii.

Ganaden also is using a type of label that is more environmentally friendly, he said. Rather than the oil-based films water bottles usually use, he said the company is using corn-based polylactic acid — known as PLA — that is biodegradable and will dissolve in about two months.

"We want to be known as a company that's going to be eco-conscious," Ganaden said.

"This is our first effort toward our eventual goal of moving toward a corn-based material for the entire bottle," he said. Until then, he said ecologically savvy consumers can peel off the labels and throw them in with their compostable trash.

He said the labels come from the Gilbreth Packaging company in St. Louis, Mo. as part of its Earthfirst PLA films, derived from a resin that utilizes the starch stored in corn and converts it into natural plant sugars.

The sugar is then fermented into lactic acid that is used to create a plastic resin pellet called polylactic acid.

The company will use a marketing campaign that includes two bottled-water mascots: Miss aloha pure and Mr. aloha deep.

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