



SUMMARY REPORT

Irregular Operations: A Customer Care Workshop, January 17 & 18, 2008
“Together We Can Find the Answer”

The workshop focused on improving customer relations during aviation Irregular Operations (IRROPS) and involved 40 airports, six major airlines, and six consultants / technical providers. The agenda and key information are highlighted below.

Greg Principato, President of ACI-NA opened the workshop by welcoming the group and making introductions.

Kate Hanni from the Coalition for an Airline Passengers’ Bill of Rights gave a “voice of the customer” account of the state of airports and airlines during IRROPS from the passengers’ perspective. Ms. Hanni spoke about her organization of nearly 22,000 members focused on lobbying the government and legislature for airports and airlines to provide essential human needs (i.e. Airline Passengers’ Bill of Rights) during flight delays. The Coalition is recommending DOT oversight on plans developed by individual states.

Dick Marchi of ACI-NA discussed the workshop’s goals and objectives which were to promote an information exchange on providing excellent passenger care during Irregular Operations (IRROPS) situations; to follow-on with the successful workshop in September hosted by DFW Airport, and to work with industry peers to identify new opportunities to better service passengers during an IRROPS event. He also mentioned the forthcoming formation of a National Task Force to Develop Model Contingency Plans to Deal with Lengthy Airline On-Board Ground Delays. **[Note:** The National Task Force was announced on January 22, 2008 and its membership is attached at the end of this summary.]

Jim Crites of DFW Airport set the stage for the workshop by defining IRROPS, discussing how IRROPS are currently handled as well as recapped the “findings” that came out of the recent successful September 2007 IRROPS Workshop held at DFW. That workshop revealed that through appropriate training, better communication and implementing enabling technologies, customer service can dramatically be improved during IRROPS situations. A more detailed summary of the September workshop is outlined below:

Highlights include:

- Identified and explored the causes of the public’s concern that airports and airlines lack awareness of or fail to adequately prepare for Irregular Operations as they continue to take proactive measures to address customer needs.
- Acknowledged that better communication, collaboration and coordination between all stakeholders: the airlines, airports, TSA, and FAA – before and during an event – will dramatically improve the level of customer service in the eyes of passengers.

Immediate local level critical actions identified include:

- Coordinate individual airline and airport Irregular Operation plans to identify overlaps and gaps across all service providers.



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- Communicate, collaborate and coordinate to present consistent and accurate messages to both employees and passengers (i.e. ensure all parties understand that a designated concession is open for business).
- Review with Concessionaires the value of remaining open and maintaining an adequately stocked supply of items unique to Irregular Operations such as medical, infant diapers/formula, etc.
- Develop and implement a unified Communications Program providing consistent and timely messaging to the Public and all service provider employees.
- Establish a network of professionals that will develop, in advance, comprehensive Irregular Operation guidelines that encompass all stakeholders' needs and ensure they are met.

More specifically, it was determined that "gaps" exist in delivering excellent customer service that include:

- A need for a consistent / unified message to all customers and stakeholders;
- A better ability to partner with CBP, FAA and TSA to coordinate activities and better manage and react to severe delays;
- The inconsistent use of reservation/check-in systems to re-route passengers and baggage between airlines;
- Increased concessions hours of operation, product offering and stock levels.

Near-term actions to be undertaken on a local level include:

- Create an Irregular Operations Committee comprised of all airport stakeholders (e.g. air carriers, airport departments, Concessionaires, CBP, FAA, TSA, Media, Ground Transportation Service Providers, area hotels, etc.
- Develop a unified, major talking point, communications plan that considers the needs of all service providers, employees and the traveling public
- Develop a partnership with the local media for effective broadcasting of messages
- Enhance Airport/Airline web pages as a means of communicating real-time events to employees and the traveling public

Near-term actions to be undertaken on a national level include:

- ACI-NA and ATA to initiate partnering effort with CBP, FAA and TSA to:
 - Highlight efforts of Aviation Industry to improve performance
 - Explore opportunities by which Federal entities might enhance areas of their operations that might be affecting customer service levels during periods of irregular operations
 - Achieve buy-in for continued dialog and partnering
 - Gain commit of Federal entities to partner at the local airport level
- ACI-NA and ATA to initiate outreach to Congress to impart knowledge of actions being taken by the Aviation Industry to improve service levels during period of Irregular Operations



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Mr. Crites also provided Sub Group reports that updated the action items from key Government Affairs, Concessions and IRROPS Guideline groups.

Scott K. Macey from the Office of Inspector General, DOT presented on findings from a recent investigation of airlines and airports handling of customer service during flight delays. Mr. Macey outlined DOT and OIG best practices (i.e. intelligent canceling, flexible staffing arrangements/periodic duty rotations, open gate space for offloading passengers, various procedural improvements, and FAA Airspace Flow Program) and action items for airports and airlines to implement immediately to minimize disruption to passengers during IRROPS events. The DOT is in the process of determining whether it should adopt a rule (Federal Register, Vol. 72, No. 223) to enhance airline passenger protections in the following seven ways:

- 1) Require carriers to adopt contingency plans for lengthy tarmac delays and incorporate them in their contracts of carriage;
- 2) Require carriers to respond to consumer problems;
- 3) Deem operating a chronically delayed flight to be unfair and deceptive;
- 4) Require carriers to publish delay data;
- 5) Require carriers to publish complaint data;
- 6) Require on-time performance reporting for international flights; and
- 7) Require carriers to audit their compliance with their customer service plans.

DOT sought comment through January 22, 2008 and will deliver results in early September. With the contingency plan incorporated in the contract of carriage, passengers would be able to sue in court for damages if a carrier failed to adhere to its plan.

David Isihara of BOS Airport described the lessons learned during the development of an IRROPS Response Plan. Mr. Isihara explained that his airport organized many existing programs into one over-arching document and the plan is built on cooperation between all parties including Massport, airlines, and concessionaires. He described how Massport used an Executive Director's Memorandum to establish procedures for aircraft operators to minimize long on-board delays for passengers and to take action when needed. The Massport model begins with: proper Notification to Massport Operations (Inbound and waiting for a gate > 15 minutes; Off-gate with outbound delay > 30 minutes); establishes a formal Action Plan (offloading options and resources required); and specifies that any aircraft that has passengers onboard for more than three hours and is not in the process of deplaning will be considered a "critical situation", prompting appropriate actions (i.e. aircraft return to company or common use gates or remote parking/bussing, and filing formal report to Director of Aviation if deplaning does not occur within three hours). He also discussed their IRROP Committee, roles of Massport and Airlines in IRROPS events as well as the resources Massport provides for passengers stranded inside the terminal.

Tara Hamilton of MWA Airport discussed the Public Affairs role in IRROPS as a key component of emergency planning. Ms. Hamilton demonstrated that proper



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communication begins with a framework that involves standard operating procedures for both airports and airlines that are coordinated and in alignment with one another to ensure proper customer relations. She stressed that the airport should be the provider of the most factual, consistent and timely information. In terms of proper Internal Communications, she discussed coordination with the airport community as well as utilizing the public address system in the terminals, electronic message boards on roadways, FIDS boards, and Public Information Desks. For proper External Communications, she mentioned not only using airport websites for the public, but also providing an airport spokesperson who can effectively communicate the details of the customer service plan to the media. She stated that flexibility from everyone will be needed as passenger expectations continue to grow as more services are provided. She concluded by discussing how to properly deal with the increased scrutiny of the public and media by communicating in a professional manner, by coordinating efforts with airports, airlines, TSA and FAA; and by educating the public on aviation stakeholder roles and responsibilities.

Paul Martinez of DFW Airport also discussed the planning involved in the development of an IRROPS Response Plan. He explained that there are four important tasks to implement in a plan that include: Pre-Planning (form IRROPS committee and establish media coordination and communication), Training (front line and integrated staff), Execution (notification process and appropriate communication plans activated), and De-brief / Planning / Training (review logs, talk to all parties to get an overall assessment, and revise plans accordingly). He summarized by stating that an IRROPS plan will always be a work-in-progress that will be updated through continuous communication, collaboration and coordination.

Kim Couper of United Airlines discussed the December 2007 experience for her airline where they successfully overcame three ice storms in Chicago. Ms. Couper discussed improvements made at United including Ground Delay Automation, EasyReBook system and Self Service IRROPS information for passengers.

Ron Dunsky from PASSUR Corp discussed the Potential Role of Technology in solving IRROPS issues. The software technology they developed can provide alerts for ground delay, stranded aircraft, etc. which are critical in IRROPS situations where the most current, up-to-date information is required by airports and airlines. Some of the technology includes PortAlert which allows airports to communicate airfield condition reports instantly to all tenants; PortalChat which allows for instant communication and collaborative decision making between airport, airlines, FBOs, corporate flight departments, ground transportation and all dialogue during IRROPS situations; and FlightLink Solution that provide passengers and tenants with the most accurate flight information.

Tim Anderson from MSP Airport discussed the MSP Customer Service Action Committee (CSAS), which is a dedicated group comprised of a cross-section of airport, tenants, TSA, concessions that meets monthly. The group focuses on issues that occur



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inside the terminal only and specifically targets customer service. The group monitors IRROPS situations and has a specific committee dedicated to stranded passengers as well.

Over the course of the two-day workshop, time was provided for **two breakout sessions** on two topics: 1) How to set up the plan for an IRROPS situation and 2) "What can you do this season?" focused on moving from problem to implementation while addressing technologies, regulations, legislation and other elements which may affect actions.

Dick Marchi from ACI-NA wrapped up the workshop by discussing Forward Plans that include how far we have come and follow-up points. He also asked for feedback from action items, including hard dates and responsibilities to ensure commitment from the group on making effective changes in customer service for airlines and airports.



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National Task Force to Develop Model Contingency Plans to Deal with Lengthy Airline On-Board Ground Delays

Samuel Podberesky	Chairman Assistant General Counsel for Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings, U.S. DOT
D. Kirk Shaffer	Vice Chairman, Associate Administrator for Airports, Federal Aviation Administration
Basil Barimo	Vice President, Operations and Safety, Air Transport Association
Brian Bartal	Project Manager, American Eagle Airlines
Roger Cohen	President, Regional Airline Association
Michael C. Collins	Disability Rights Advocate
James M. Crites	Executive Vice President, Operations, Dallas/Forth Worth International Airport
Benjamin R. DeCosta	Aviation General Manager, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport
George F. Doughty	Executive Director, Lehigh-Northampton Airport Authority
Charles M. Durham, III	Sr. Manager of Dispatch, ExpressJet Airlines
Edward P. Faberman	Executive Director, Air Carrier Association of America
James J. Gaydos	Director, Airport Services, American Airlines
Kate Hanni	Founder/Spokesperson, Coalition for an Airline Passengers' Bill of Rights
Steve Hozdulick	Senior Director – Operational Performance, Southwest Airlines
Kevin Hudson	Senior Manager, Operational Performance, Tracking and Reporting, Frontier Airlines
William R. Lange	Vice President, Safety & Compliance, Compass Airlines
Douglas E. Lavin	Regional Vice President, International Air Transport Association – North America
D. Leo Malloy, Jr.	Vice President, Customer Service, Skyway Airlines/Midwest Connect
Alex Marren	Vice President, Operational Services, United Airlines
Deborah C. McElroy	Executive Vice President, Policy and External Affairs, Airports Council International – North America
Robert K. Muhs	Vice President, System Operations Control, Northwest Airlines
Patrick V. Murphy	Aviation Consultant, representing US Airways
Capt. Larry Newman	Chairman, Air Traffic Service Group, Air Line Pilots Association, International
Bradley, D. Penrod	CEO/Executive Director, Allegheny County Airport Authority
Paul. M. Ruden	Senior Vice President, Legal and Industry Affairs, American Society of Travel Agents
Daniel Rutenberg	Vice President, International Airline Passengers Association
Melissa Sabatine	Vice President of Regulatory Affairs, American Association of Airport Executives
Leo J. Schefer	President, Washington Airports Task Force
Lisa C. Scully	Assistant Director, Customer, Cargo, Concessions and Airport Services, the Port Authority of NY and NJ
Jim Tabor	Vice President of Operations, AirTran Airways
Daniel A. Weiss	Managing Director, International Policy and Regulatory Affairs, Continental Airlines
Warren R. Wilkinson	Vice President of Government Affairs and Corporate Communications, Republic Airways
William H. Williams, Jr.	Aviation Director, North Carolina Department of Transportation
Thomas E. Zoeller	President and CEO, National Air Carrier Association
TBD	Spirit Airlines