

Effective partnerships between airports, airlines and government agencies are essential when flights are severely disrupted. When this coordination fails, delays occur and passengers suffer.

This problem won't be solved by requiring hundreds of separate airport plans and adding more government bureaucracy. We don't need more plans to solve long tarmac delays; we need to use existing plans better, starting with three simple changes.

Government rules say airlines must "coordinate" contingency plans with airports, but some airlines interpret this to mean that they only need to send airports their plans, rather than engaging airports in real coordination. *CHANGE 1- Airlines should actually meet with all airport officials to coordinate contingency plans.*

Airport officials have limited ability to tell airlines or FAA not to send more aircraft to land at the facility unless they close the airport, which can make a bad situation worse. *CHANGE 2 – Airports should be able to tell FAA and airlines "no more flights" if it cannot accommodate the aircraft or respond to airline requests for help in a reasonable time. FAA and airlines also must provide airports with accurate information about diverted flights and other diversion airports to prevent overloading any single diversion airport.*

Airlines sign leases that provide exclusive use of gates and operate or contract for ground equipment needed to handle planes. During weather emergencies this equipment may be needed for competing airlines to unload passengers. *CHANGE 3 – Under extraordinary circumstances, airports should be able to take control of gates, unload passengers and direct equipment to serve planes with the greatest need, regardless of company affiliation.*

During situations like those that took place this past weekend, safety is the top priority. For airports, this means keeping runways clear for diversions that may be low on fuel and to safely park planes. The next priority is to help passengers by providing blankets, cots, food, water, and toiletries. Airports also work with passengers experiencing disruptions to arrange hotels and ground transportation.

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