
Association for Airline Passenger Rights Praises Hefty Fines Levied on Continental, Express Jet and Mesaba Airlines for Overnight Tarmac Delay

WASHINGTON, D.C. (November 24, 2009) – The [Association for Airline Passenger Rights](http://www.flyfriendlyskies.com) (AAPR) today praised the U.S. Department of Transportation's decision to levy hefty fines against three air carriers for the August incident involving an excessive tarmac delay in Rochester, Minnesota. On August 6th, beleaguered passengers were stranded on the plane overnight with limited food and water, or access to bathroom facilities for over six hours.

"After nearly ten years, passengers finally won an important battle against excessive tarmac delays," said **Brandon M. Macsata**, Executive Director of the Association for Airline Passenger Rights about the precedent-setting fines. "The mere fact that the airlines continue to argue this is not an important safety or quality issue smacks of a greedy industry that has flown out of control. No passenger should be expected to remain confined in an airplane on the tarmac for more than three hours, and hopefully these fines will add to the momentum behind passing a strong, meaningful Passenger Bill of Rights."

According to DOT, a total civil penalty of \$100,000 was levied against Continental Airlines and ExpressJet Airlines for their roles in causing the passengers on board Continental Express flight 2816 to remain on the aircraft at Rochester International Airport for an unreasonable period of time on Aug. 8, 2009. Continental also provided a full refund to each passenger and also offered each passenger additional compensation to tangibly acknowledge their time and discomfort. In addition, DOT assessed a civil penalty of \$75,000 against Mesaba Airlines, which provided ground handling for the flight, for its role in the incident. .

"I hope that this sends a signal to the rest of the airline industry that we expect airlines to respect the rights of air travelers," said **Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood**. "We will also use what we have learned from this investigation to strengthen protections for airline passengers subjected to long tarmac delays."

The Association for Airline Passenger Rights is a 501(c)(4) tax-exempt, nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote fairer customer service and accessibility standards in the airline industry and to improve passenger satisfaction. AAPR was formed in response to growing dissatisfaction among American consumers toward the airline industry. According to the American Consumer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), a polling organization that rates over forty-three businesses in ten sectors based on in-depth interviewing and computer-based extrapolation of its results, the Big Six legacy airlines (full-service providers with national or international flight routes) rate the lowest of all sixteen industries surveyed in the first quarter of 2008.

For more information about the Association for Airline Passenger Rights or the need for a strong, meaningful Passenger Bill of Rights, please visit www.flyfriendlyskies.com or contact AAPR directly at info@flyfriendlyskies.com.

####