



UNITED FINED \$2.75 MILLION FOR MISTREATING DISABLED PASSENGERS

News / Airlines



The U.S. government is fining United Continental Holdings Inc. \$2.75 million for mistreating passengers with disabilities and for six instances of stranding aircraft on the tarmac.

The Department of Transportation began receiving a “significant increase in the number of disability-related complaints” about how United treated customers in wheelchairs or who needed additional assistance, the agency said Thursday in a press release. Investigators found the carrier wasn’t promptly helping these passengers on and off planes, and was slow to return wheelchairs and other devices.

The airline also kept passengers on board aircraft longer than the three-hour limit during ground delays without giving them a chance to leave the planes, according to the release. Five of the incidents occurred at Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport on Dec. 8, 2013, and one was a flight that diverted to Houston Hobby Airport on May 20, 2015.

“It is our duty to ensure that travelers with disabilities have access to the services they need, and that when significant tarmac delays happen, travelers are not left on the plane,” Transportation

Secretary Anthony Foxx said in the release.

Of the \$2 million assessed on the disability violations, United was allowed to spend \$650,000 for improved audits of its wheelchair vendors and to develop a mobile-device app to speed assistance for people with disabilities. The company also was given a credit for the \$650,000 it paid in disability-related claims to customers.

The government is also cutting the \$750,000 tarmac-delay fine by \$375,000, which United will use to to buy equipment allowing aircraft to reach gates during poor weather conditions, the DOT said in the release.

In a blog post, the company said it was doing more to help passengers with disabilities. “We want you to know that providing convenient, comfortable and flier-friendly service to all of our customers is one of our top priorities, and we are committed to meeting all DOT rules,” the company said.

On the flight delays, United has recorded improved on-time statistics in recent months as it uses new technology, it said in an e-mailed statement

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