Headline: Stormy conditions can cause problems

Deckhead: Vital steps to follow should rain cancel your flight

By Samantha Brown

There’s nothing like these major storms to make us think, “What would I do if?” And since storms that shut down air space and lay waste to entire regions can happen any time of the year, here’s my checklist to consider when the next big storm comes around:

***Always try to get out ahead of the storm –***With an impending weather event, airlines will waive any fees associated with changing your trip. For instance, American Airlines once announced three days before a recent threatening storm that it would rebook people for free. Only for the dates affected, of course, but take them up on it.I know a lot of people, once they’re on vacation, don’t want to cut things short. But trust me, just cut your vacation short and get out. Don’t be the family that’s stranded somewhere unfamiliar.

### *Follow your airline on social media –* I can’t stress enough how important it is when you travel to have Instagram or X (formerly Twitter) for updates and alerts, as well as getting answers to your direct questions. Airlines have pulled a lot of their customer service from their phone banks to social media but not everyone is on social media. You could receive a much faster response than if you call. This is more important if you’re already at the airport and your flight is canceled. It’s sometimes possible to get rebooked via social media more quickly than if you wait in line with the 150 other people whose flights are canceled or called the airlines’ toll-free number.

### *Use Gethuman.com –* Gethuman.com is a handy website to visit when plugging in those toll-free contact numbers into your phone. Enter the company and it will tell you what number to keep pressing to get a representative. There’s nothing worse than seeing your cell phone battery drop as you navigate through 10 minutes of prompts.

### *Book an airport hotel as a safety net –* If you chance it and choose to stay put, make a hotel reservation as a safety net in case flights get canceled. At the very least have the nearby hotel numbers ready to go, so you can call immediately if you need to. And be sure to note their local number, not the 1-800 number. If you make your flight, then congratulations. Many hotels will likely waive the 24-hour cancellation fee since they will have about 200 other people interested. Plan C: If it’s safe and makes sense to drive, stay out of what will be a storm zone, then book a car rental. There’s no cancelation fee and that could be your last chance out of the area.

### *Always stay calm –* As stressful as this situation can be, it won’t be better if everyone is venting their frustrations. No one sits hoping for a major storm to impact vacations or work days, and you’re all on the same side, even if it doesn’t feel like it. If you need to, walk away for a bit to just breathe before pushing forward.

### *Know when to stay put –* All that said, sometimes the safest option is to stay exactly where you are and wait out a storm. If you’ve weighed out all your plans and backup plans for getting home and things still seem unsafe, stay put.

Cutline: RAIN DROPS – Travelers should have a contingency plan should their flights be canceled because of stormy conditions. Image: Nick Starichenko. Adobe Stock.