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## Flight cancellations leave passengers high & dry



Two major airlines grounded their aircrafts following aviation watchdog Directorate-General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA) orders. New Delhi: The grounding of planes due to engine malfunction by India's two prominent airlines, which used to operate more than 1,200 flights daily have travel plans of millions of flyers. The two major airlines grounded the aircrafts following aviation watchdog Directorate-General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA) orders. The cancellation would affect estimated 1.15 lakh passengers and the impact is expected to get intense in April as it is the peak travel season.

The passengers will have an option of rebooking (subject to availability) a flight or a full refund. However, passenger booked on all these flights are eligible for compensation as per the DGCA passenger right regulations, which is over and above a full refund. If the airline fails to provide the alternative flight as per the DGCA guideline.

There has been no communication to approx. 1.15 lakh passengers of 645 cancelled flights by any of the airlines about the compensation, apart from a refund. "Are we talking about some alternative arrangements in a timely manner to the affect flyers," says Akanksha Anshu, co-founder and MD of passenger's right protection and compensation management company refundme.in.

She further adds why DGCA had to intervene and bar all the flights with an immediate effect when airlines have mended guideline to do a health check-up of the flight by a qualified aircraft maintenance engineer. Does that mean airlines are commercialised to an extent, wherein they are not bothered about the safety of the flyers and their crew?

The current situation leaves consumers stranded and causes a great deal of inconvenience, apart from a huge ambiguity. Not to mention that, due to the attitude of the airlines, the passengers have an uphill task to claim any form of compensation.

In Europe and America, apart from regulatory bodies, various companies and associations provide help to passengers. However, in India this area remains unexplored. At present refundme.in is the only company in India which is extending its support and guidance to the flyers concerned at a rate of more than 100 passengers per day and is actively working with DGCA, airlines and passenger associations to look after the welfare for the passengers.