

# High TMC Call Volume Impacts Wait Time

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The travel industry is experiencing challenges related to an unexpected surge in travel, including changes to airline schedules, airline cancellations, and staffing shortages. Unfortunately, these challenges are impacting Travel Management Companies (TMCs), resulting in an increased demand for assistance. TMCs are reporting increasing call volume, and travelers are reporting extended call wait times or delays in email response times.

There are several actions travel managers and travelers can take to help with the high TMC demand and increased call volume.

## When Booking/Updating/Cancelling Future Travel:

Use the DoD booking system for all future travel whenever possible, including new bookings, changes, and cancellations.

- 1. Book travel and approve authorizations in a timely manner.** Booking and/or approving travel within a week of departure minimizes the risk of the need to rebook or contact the TMC. If you have changes to travel with a departure date more than a week away and cannot make the changes in the DoD booking system, email the TMC with your request, including your departure date in the subject line.
- 2. Ensure travel cards are activated.** Travel cards that are deactivated or have insufficient credit limits result in card declines and increase calls to the TMC. Travelers should work with their organization's travel card Agency Program Coordinator (APC) to ensure their Travel Card is activated and has sufficient credit limit prior to booking travel. Defense Travel Administrators can also be proactive by reviewing the Accounts Info List and the Departure Report in the Defense Travel System (DTS) to identify travelers who may need their travel cards activated or credit limits increased.
- 3. Allow 24 hours for DTS authorizations to be worked/ticketed.** If your request has been in "CTO Submit" status for more than 24 hours, contact the Travel Assistance Center (TAC) via Live Chat at <https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/livechat.cfm>. Please keep in mind that the TAC is unable to assist with new reservations, "TMC assist" requests, reservation cancellations, or ticketing.
- 4. If you can't cancel using DTS, use TMC Live Chat.** Some TMCs have a desktop or mobile live chat tool that allows travelers to connect with an online agent to handle simpler requests like cancelling a trip or requesting an invoice copy. Often simpler issues can be handled faster through a TMC chat session than by calling directly.

## Preparing to Travel:

- 1. Sign-up for airline, rental car, and lodging loyalty programs.** Brand loyalty accounts often come with benefits like priority rebooking, dedicated contact channels, and more.
- 2. Download the apps.** Download any apps offered by the airlines, train companies, rental car companies, and lodging chains that you will utilize during your travel. This will allow you to interact directly with the service provider if you experience an excessive TMC hold time or there's a disruption.

- 3. Confirm your seat assignment.** As soon as your airline reservations are ticketed and your invoice has been issued, confirm your seat assignment using the airline app or website. You only need your last name and airline confirmation number for most websites and apps. Passengers with a confirmed seat assignment are far less likely to be bumped from a flight due to overbooking.

## When Traveling:

- 1. Flight disruptions – rebook same airline.** If you are in transit, experience a flight disruption and an excessive TMC hold time, you may interact with the airline directly to rebook your flight on the same airline, maintaining your government airfare. Using the airline app or self-service kiosk in the airport can help you avoid lines at the airport or hold times with the airline reservation center.
- 2. Flight disruptions – rebook different airline.** If you are in transit, experience a flight disruption, and an excessive TMC hold time, you may interact with the airlines directly to rebook your flight.
  - a) If your original airline has a customer service representative available (in person, phone or through chat on an app/website), inform them you are on official US Government travel and need to be rebooked on a different airline to meet your mission. The airline may be able to transfer your ticket and maintain your government airfare. If they cannot transfer your ticket, ask to be “protected/rebooked” on a government rate on another airline. Then you can finalize your arrangements directly with the new airline. It is always better if you can provide a suggestion on which alternate flight/route you can take.
  - b) If your original airline can’t “protect/rebook” you on an alternate airline, you may, when experiencing a flight disruption and excessive TMC hold times, book directly with an alternate airline. (Be sure to keep a record of your original unused ticket number.) Make sure you request to be booked on a U.S. Government airfare, if available, and that you have access to your travel orders (if applicable), and an active travel card. The lowest cost economy or coach class fares accommodations must be used. Any upgraded accommodations must be authorized or approved as stated in JTR, par. 020206-J.
- 3. Rental Car reservations – rebooking or new reservations in transit.** If you need a new rental car reservation or to rebook an existing reservation due to a flight disruption and you experience an excessive TMC hold time, you may interact with the rental car company directly. Book your new reservation or rebook your existing reservation through their customer service number or in person at the rental car counter. Be sure to ask for the government rate under the U.S. Government Rental Car program and confirm that the Government Administrative Rate Supplement (GARS) fee (\$5/day) is included on the contract.
- 4. Rental Car reservations – cancellations.** If you need to cancel your rental car reservation while in transit and you experience an excessive TMC hold time, you can do so directly with the rental car company using their app, website, reservation number or in person at the rental car counter.
- 5. Hotel reservations.** If you need to change, cancel, or book a hotel reservation while in transit and you experience an excessive TMC hold time:

- a) You can cancel or change the reservation directly with the hotel. Be aware of your hotel's cancellation policy and note the cancellation number, date/time of the call, and the name of the person who processed your change/cancellation. If you cancel after the hotel cancellation timeframe, regardless of the cause of the cancellation, you may still be charged for one-night room and tax. Hotels that are booked under the Integrated Lodging Program (ILP) (<https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/lodging.cfm>) offer you the most flexibility.
- b) You can book a reservation direct with the hotel. Check the local lodging per diem rate here before booking (<https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/perdiemCalc.cfm>).
  - i. If the site is an Integrated Lodging Program (ILP) site, you are directed to book DoD Lodging or Privatized lodging first. If neither are available and the ILP site offers DoD Preferred lodging, book an approved hotel ([https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/ILP Preferred List.pdf](https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/ILP_PREFERRED_List.pdf)) and request the DoD Preferred rate.
  - ii. Otherwise, book the applicable FedRooms or Government rate, keeping in mind the local lodging per diem. Be aware of any hotel policies and fees, particularly deposits and cancellations.