

Q: There seem to be so many things that could potentially affect my holiday this summer – whether they be airline strikes or freak weather conditions. What are my rights if my flight gets delayed or cancelled?

A: The existing legislation applies to all flights departing from or flying to a European Union airport via an EU airline.

If your flight is cancelled or changed within 14 days of your journey, for reasons other than ‘extraordinary circumstances’ (see below), then you have the right to a refund or alternative transportation, as well as compensation. You can claim up to €600 depending on the notice of cancellation, your flight distance and how much delay you suffer. Since November 2009 you could also be entitled to compensation, as well as meals, drinks, two phone calls (or emails, faxes etc) and accommodation if necessary, if your flight is delayed.

If your flight is delayed or cancelled due to ‘extraordinary circumstances’ such as extreme weather, strikes or security risks, you won’t be entitled to compensation. The airline should book you onto the next available flight, or offer a refund if your flight is delayed by more than 5 hours, but only if you decide not to travel. You may be entitled to receive catering, communication and accommodation assistance if your flight is delayed for a number of hours or eventually cancelled.

If you are on a package holiday, the travel company must follow arrangements set out in the travel brochure to cover delays. If they don’t, you may be able to claim a refund and/or compensation.

The Civil Aviation Authority website offers more info at: www.caa.co.uk. If you believe you are entitled to compensation but the airline or tour operator denies responsibility you should see an experienced adviser, for example, at a Citizens Advice Bureau. Search for your nearest at: www.adviceguide.org.uk