

*Palm Beach*  
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



# Tarmac Delay Contingency Plan



Palm Beach County  
Department of Airports  
Operations Division  
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## **SUMMARY**

The Palm Beach County Department of Airports (DOA) has prepared this Tarmac Delay Contingency Plan (Plan) because it operates a commercial service airport and may be used by an air carrier described in USC 42301 for diversions. This Plan meets the requirements for the Palm Beach International Airport (PBI) in accordance with USC 43201 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012. This plan has been prepared using information concerning the physical layout and limitations of PBI, PBI air carrier information and PBI's Airport Certification Manual. This plan will address the following items, generally experienced by long delays:

- Passenger deplanement following excessive tarmac delays,
- Sharing of facilities and gate availability at the airport, and
- Procedures for providing a sterile area following excessive tarmac delays for passengers who have not yet cleared United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

## **AIRPORT INFORMATION**

Palm Beach International Airport (PBI) is owned and operated by Palm Beach County (PBC). PBI is classified as a medium hub airport and ranks as the 56<sup>th</sup> busiest airport in North America, enplaning over three million passengers annually. The Airport is located approximately 2.5 miles from downtown West Palm Beach and 3.5 miles west of the Town of Palm Beach. Eleven (11) domestic and international airlines currently serve the Airport. Commercial air carriers that offer service to and from the Airport include Air Canada, American Airlines, United Airlines, Delta Airlines, JetBlue Airways, Spirit Airlines, Southwest Airlines, Frontier, Sun Country, Bahamas Air, and Silver Airways. The Airport has twenty-eight (28) gates with passenger loading bridges.

Physical Address: 1000 Palm Beach International Airport  
West Palm Beach, FL 33406

24-hour Phone: (561) 471-4720 (Airport Communication Center)

Runways: 10L/28R – 10,000 x 150 ft., asphalt, grooved  
14/32 – 6,931 x 150 ft., asphalt, grooved  
10R/28L – 3,213 x 75 ft., asphalt

Contact: Peter E. Labbe, Director of Operations

The majority of the taxiways and runways at PBI are currently designed for Airport Design Group (ADG) IV aircraft. The largest aircraft currently operating at PBI in this ADG is the B767-300. Due to the physical layout of the airport and the limitations for taxiways and very large aircraft movements / parking, the use of PBI by ADG-V and VI aircraft require close coordination with DOA Operations and PBI Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT).

## **DIVERSIONS/DELAYS**

Diversions or delays in the departure or arrival of aircraft can occur from a variety of reasons. Diversions or delays can be caused by weather situations, air traffic control congestion, equipment or utility failures and events located at other areas of the country. Due to its proximity to large airports in Florida, PBI regularly receives diversions from a variety of airports, including Orlando International Airport (MCO), Ft. Lauderdale Hollywood International Airport (FLL) and Miami International Airport (MIA). The majority of diversions are due to weather related reasons. The airport has no control over the number of diversions being sent into the airport and relies on the FAA Air Traffic to manage the number of diversions being pushed into specific airports. The DOA will manage the diversions as best able, extreme saturation (10-15+ diversions) of diversions into the airport should be avoided to not overload the airport resources (taxiways, parking ramps, passenger loading bridges, one stair truck, Etc.).

A. Notification

Notification of aircraft intending to divert to PBI primarily comes from the PBI Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT). Notification of aircraft intending to divert to PBI also may come from the airlines. Regardless of notification, it is essential that DOA Operations be provided with the most current, up to date information regarding the diversion as possible. The purpose of which is to coordinate effectively with service providers to provide maximum customer support to the affected passengers and companies experiencing the delay/diversion. DOA Operations shall share information with appropriate organizations to include DOA Communication Center, ATCT, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and as necessary, PBC Sheriffs Office (PBSO) and Customs & Border Protection (CBP).

## **FACILITIES**

A. Terminals/Concourses

There are three (3) Concourses at PBI with approximately 28 gates. Concourse A is primarily a commuter terminal and Concourse B and Concourse C each have multiple airlines with several daily departures. Concourse B and C each have passenger loading bridges at each gate as well as multiple food and beverage and retail locations.

B. Gates

There are approximately twenty-eight (28) passenger loading bridges at PBI on Concourses B and C. The passenger loading bridges may be utilized to deplane passengers as soon as possible following a request from airlines/ground handlers to DOA Operations at the contact number listed previously. Approximately fifteen (15) of the gates are leased to airlines and are Signatory however, by agreement, those passenger loading bridges revert back to the control of the Department of Airports when an aircraft is absent and not expected to be used by the Signatory airline. The remaining gates are under Department of Airports direct control and used by Signatory and Non-signatory carriers operating at PBI. These gates may be made available and assigned upon request from airlines/ground handlers on a first-come, first-serve basis. If multiple aircraft are waiting for passenger loading bridges, aircraft at passenger loading bridges under DOA direct control will be directed to deplane passengers and relocate the aircraft to alternative parking.

C. Hardstands

There are two (2) hardstand locations for the parking of aircraft at PBI available for use by delay-impacted aircraft located at the East and West Remote areas. The West Remote area can support three narrow body aircraft or three wide body aircraft, or a combination thereof. The East Remote area has six narrow body aircraft positions and one wide body aircraft position. Hardstands at both areas are under DOA direct control and will be assigned upon request from airlines/ground handlers on a first-come, first-serve basis. Non based air carriers that use PBI for diversions should have arrangements from a current aircraft ground handler based at PBI.

D. Other Parking Areas

In the event that all gates are utilized and all hardstand locations are utilized by delay-impacted aircraft, additional parking areas are available at PBI. DOA Operations may, depending on the severity of the diversion event, close certain taxiways for the parking of aircraft. Taxiway M may be available as well as portions of Taxiway B. The use of these areas must be thoroughly coordinated with DOA Operations, PBI ATCT and affected airlines/ground handlers as they require the closure of taxiways and subsequent issuance of appropriate FAA NOTAMs.

E. Equipment

There is various equipment onsite at PBI to accommodate diversion aircraft. Several airlines and ground handlers maintain the equipment necessary to support the servicing of Aircraft Design Group IV aircraft, such equipment includes tugs, tow bars, baggage equipment, ground power units, etc. In addition, DOA maintains one set of truck-mounted air stairs (Air Stair-81). The stair truck equipment is located at PBC Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting Station #81 and can be provided upon request.

Aircraft Design Group V & VI do not provide regular service at PBI and therefore the air carriers and ground handlers have limited equipment to ground handle these types of very large aircraft.

## **DEPLANEMENT OF PASSENGERS**

Following excessive tarmac delays, it may become necessary for the passengers to deplane the aircraft. Upon receiving notification of a diverted aircraft, PBI Operations will attempt to work closely with the air carrier to assist with parking locations. The Airport will attempt to work with the air carrier to be kept updated with the air carrier's intentions on aircraft/passenger handling. The Airport has no control over the actions or

intent of the air carriers/pilot and command, but will attempt to assist with the request as they are received by the air carriers. The decision to deplane is determined by the air carrier and pilot in command. At this time, the intentions may include:

- a. holding at the parking location
- b. holding in sequence
- c. taxiing to assigned gate / hard stand and deplaning
- d. take off upon ATCT clearance

It is essential for DOA Operations to continuously remain in communication with the affected airline/ground handler as time elapses. If the carrier makes a decision to deplane the passengers from the aircraft, the aircraft will taxi to the appropriate gate assigned by DOA Operations (if available) or hard stand on remote parking. The affected airline will be responsible for providing a qualified representative to operate the passenger loading bridge equipment. The aircraft will then deplane the passengers into the appropriate passenger holding area.

It is important to note that if TSA passenger screening operations (as determined by TSA) have ceased for the day and the airline expects to depart PBI at a later time, the passengers will not be allowed to leave the Concourse due to the unavailability of passenger screening services or may have to wait until the TSA screening checkpoint re-opens. If the passengers exit the sterile passenger holding area, they will need to be rescreened in accordance with TSA requirements. Passengers remaining in the concourse for departure will have access to food and beverage, which may be supplied by the air carrier or concessionaire food vendors located within the concourses. Highly recommended the air carriers have pre-approved arrangements through the food/retail vendors.

## **INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS**

PBI has a full-service Customs & Border Protection (CBP) and Agriculture inspection station located at the main terminal. The availability of the CBP staff and hours of operation are controlled by the CBP and are generally not readily available outside of the hours of 8am-4pm EST daily. CBP is able to process approximately 300 passengers per hour when fully staffed. The affected air carrier / ground handler should establish communications with CBP in advance of the expected arrival of any international diverted aircraft to ensure proper coordination and handling of international aircraft. Customs and Border protection coordinate with the air carrier for the deplaning of international passengers. See Appendix A – Diversion Matrix (International Flights).

### **A. CUSTOMS SERVICES**

Upon notification to CBP of any expected international arrival to PBI with passengers that have not yet cleared customs, coordination should occur between the Air Carrier/ ground handler, DOA Operations, and CBP to

discuss any plans of expected deplanement of international passengers. Once CBP has made preparations to clear the arrival aircraft and passengers, DOA Operation will assign the loading gate/hard stand for the international arrival gate to the airline.

**Note:** PBI has only one international passenger loading bridge which allows passengers to deplane directly from the aircraft to the CBP FIS for processing. The handling/deplaning of multiple unannounced international air carrier may encounter longer delays and decisions for deplaning based on facility limitations.

**Decision to Deplane:** The air carrier should determine and make appropriate notification of their intent to deplane at least one hour prior to tarmac delay expiration while CBP is open and at least two hours after CBP regular hours (CBP not staffed).

## B. CUSTOMS SERVICES UNAVAILABLE

Upon notification to CBP of any expected international arrival to PBI with passengers that have not yet cleared customs, if for any reason CBP is unable to provide CBP services and the passengers must deplane the aircraft, the passengers will be held in a separate holding area. Note: The Airport has no direct control over the CBP response and staffing levels. DOA Operations, affected airline/ground handler and CBP must be in communication and agreement prior to deplaning passengers from the international arrival aircraft. The holding area will have basic services for deplaning passengers such as restroom facilities and vending machines for a brief period until CBP services are available. For extended periods of time, the delay impacted airline/ground handler can make arrangements with the food and beverage or retail concessions for delay impacted passengers

## PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE EMERGENCY CONTINGENCY PLAN

PBI will provide public access to its emergency contingency planning through one or more of the following means:

- Posting on the airport website ([www.pbia.org](http://www.pbia.org))
- Providing notice of the availability of the plan on the airport's social media accounts
- Posting signs in conspicuous locations in the Terminal
- Advertising the availability of the plan in the local newspapers of record
- Maintaining a copy of the plan in the office of the Director of Operations available upon request