Office of the Secretary, DOT

§ 250.2b Carriers to request volunteers for denied boarding.

(a) In the event of an oversold flight, every carrier shall request volunteers for denied boarding before using any other boarding priority. A “volunteer” is a person who responds to the carrier’s request for volunteers and who willingly accepts the carriers’ offer of compensation, in any amount, in exchange for relinquishing the confirmed reserved space. Any other passenger denied boarding is considered for purposes of this part to have been denied boarding involuntarily, even if that passenger accepts the denied boarding compensation.

(b) Every carrier shall advise each passenger solicited to volunteer for denied boarding, no later than the time the carrier solicits that passenger to volunteer, whether he or she is in danger of being involuntarily denied boarding and, if so, the compensation the carrier is obligated to pay if the passenger is involuntarily denied boarding. If an insufficient number of volunteers come forward, the carrier may deny boarding to other passengers.
§ 250.3 Boarding priority rules.

(a) Every carrier shall establish priority rules and criteria for determining which passengers holding confirmed reserved space shall be denied boarding on an oversold flight in the event that an insufficient number of volunteers come forward. Such rules and criteria shall reflect the obligations of the carrier set forth in §§ 250.2a and 250.2b to minimize involuntary denied boarding and to request volunteers, and shall be written in such manner as to be understandable and meaningful to the average passenger. Such rules and criteria shall not make, give, or cause any undue or unreasonable preference or advantage to any particular person or subject any particular person to any unjust or unreasonable prejudice or disadvantage in any respect whatsoever.

(b) Boarding priority factors may include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) A passenger’s time of check-in;

(2) Whether a passenger has a seat assignment before reaching the departure gate for carriers that assign seats;

(3) The fare paid by a passenger;

(4) A passenger’s frequent-flyer status; and

(5) A passenger’s disability or status as an unaccompanied minor.

§ 250.5 Amount of denied boarding compensation for passengers denied boarding involuntarily.

(a) Subject to the exceptions provided in § 250.6, a carrier to whom this part applies as described in § 250.2 shall pay compensation to passengers denied boarding involuntarily from an oversold flight at the rate of 200 percent of the fare (including any surcharges and air transportation taxes) to the passenger’s next stopover, or if none, to the passenger’s final destination, with a maximum of $800. However, the compensation shall be one-half the amount described above, with a $400 maximum, if the carrier arranges for comparable air transportation [see § 250.1], or other transportation used by the passenger that, at the time either such arrangement is made, is planned to arrive at the airport of the passenger’s next stopover, or if none, the airport of the passenger’s final destination, not later than 2 hours after the time the direct or connecting flight from which the passenger was denied boarding is planned to arrive in the case of interstate air transportation, or 4 hours after such time in the case of foreign air transportation.

(b) Carriers may offer free or reduced rate air transportation in lieu of the cash due under paragraph (a) of this section, if (1) the value of the transportation benefit offered is equal to or greater than the cash payment otherwise required, and (2) the carrier informs the passenger of the amount of cash compensation that would otherwise be due and that the passenger may decline the transportation benefit and receive the cash payment.

§ 250.6 Exceptions to eligibility for denied boarding compensation.

A passenger denied boarding involuntarily from an oversold flight shall not be eligible for denied boarding compensation if:

(a) The passenger does not comply fully with the carrier’s contract of carriage or tariff provisions regarding ticketing, reconfirmation, check-in, and acceptability for transportation;

(b) The flight for which the passenger holds confirmed reserved space is unable to accommodate that passenger because of substitution of equipment of lesser capacity when required by operational or safety reasons; or, on an aircraft with a designed passenger capacity of 60 or fewer seats, the flight for which the passenger holds confirmed reserved space is unable to accommodate that passenger due to weight/balance restrictions when required by operational or safety reasons;