

## DGCA amends rules for specially-abled passengers

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D.G.C.A, Govt. of India

To help differently-abled travellers to board flights hassle-free, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has amended a key Civil Aviation Requirement (CAR).

According to the DGCA's latest amendment, starting July 21, airlines cannot deny boarding to any person on the basis of disability and/or reduced mobility without a doctor examining the person and stating that the said passenger's health may deteriorate during the course of the journey.

The DGCA's amendment to CAR Section-3, Series M Part I "Carriage by Air" Persons with Disability (Divyangjan) and/or Persons with Reduced Mobility" comes in the wake of an incident on May 7 at Ranchi airport when ground staff of IndiGo refused to allow a differently-abled child to board the Ranchi-Hyderabad flight, saying that the child, who was admittedly agitated, would be a risk to other passengers.

The airline staff's decision to not allow the child to board the flight despite assurances from the child's parents, and several co-passengers that they had no objection to the child and his parents boarding the flight caused a national uproar. The flight had taken off for Hyderabad, leaving the child and his parents behind. Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia had ordered a review of the entire process and the DGCA had launched a fact-finding inquiry into the episode by a three-member committee a day after the incident.

The DGCA pointed out that the finding of the committee prima facie indicated inappropriate and insensitive handling of the differently-abled child and his parents by the IndiGo staff, resulting in certain non-conformances with applicable regulations. It said that the IndiGo ground staff could have avoided the situation with "a more compassionate handling". IndiGo was issued a show cause notice and, later, fined Rs.5 lakh.

The amendment has been carried out at Para 4.1.35 of the CAR, which now reads: "Airline shall not refuse carriage of any person on the basis of disability and/or reduced mobility. However, in case, an airline perceives that the health of such a passenger may deteriorate in-flight, the said passenger will have to be examined by

a Doctor in person□who shall in his/her opinion, categorically state the medical condition and whether the passenger is fit to fly or not.

After obtaining the medical opinion, the airline shall take an appropriate decision on the carriage of such passengers. In case of refusal of carriage by the airline, it shall inform the passenger in writing with the reasons therein immediately.”

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