

United Airline's total fail on my biz trip to Sioux Falls



11:36pm, flight originally scheduled for 7:50pm departure, board shows 12:50am but the reality is that our "rescue" aircraft's crew had timed-out upon arrival and we were now scheduled for 7:52am. Except that in the middle of the night they changed that to 7:15am. Note that none of the delays were due to weather. This all started with an aircraft that "went mechanical" and things cascaded downward from there. This was the biggest fail on UA's part I've seen in many years of flying.

I could rehash the gory details of United's total fail Sunday night/Monday morning, but why not just reprint the email I sent to United? I did make it back home, but I was beginning to feel like I was part of a TV show, either LOST or Manifest.

UA 4409 3/10/19 meltdown- Equipment & UA staff failures

I haven't had a truly bad experience on United in quite a few years. My SFO-FSD flight that began 3/10 was straight out of twilight-zone hell.



What a United gate agent who's hearing news he doesn't want to pass onto the passengers looks like.

After our first plane went mechanical, we were told two different "rescue" planes were coming for us. One of the planes never left its origin, and the other actually did arrive but apparently the crew must have timed out because it was within minutes of arrival that the flight was rescheduled to the next morning. I was tracking the different inbounds using both the UA app and Flightaware.

Scheduled departure of UA 4409 7:50pm

First delay at 6:48pm 3/10, said departure 9:45pm.

Subsequent delays-

7:44pm told 11pm departure

10:11pm told 11:49pm departure

10:24pm told 12:05am departure

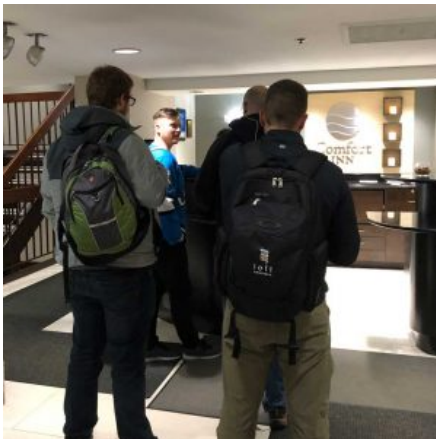
11:03pm told 12:34am departure

11:09pm told 1:25am departure
11:26pm told 12:50am departure
11:26pm receive notification plane has arrived
11:33pm receive notification rescheduled to 7:52am
11:35pm gate agent tells us to head to customer service area in concourse B (flight was at E1).



This is the van I couldn't get to in time. Being on crutches, I would have to wait for the next one since everyone else waiting was faster.

So I'm heading off, on crutches, to concourse B. Obviously I'm among the last to get there. It's just before midnight that I get my turn. I let her know it's not easy for me to get around but she tells me there's nothing closer than the Comfort Inn, where it seems most of us have been sent. I ask how to catch the shuttle; she tells me you just go down the escalator and out the doors to the hotel shuttle area. She doesn't tell me the hotel shuttle area is quite some distance to walk (remember, I'm on crutches), on sometimes-icy sidewalk and pavement. Had to ask a parking lot shuttle driver for directions; he kindly took me part of the way. Far more consideration than I got from United that evening. I get to the shuttle waiting area, and the Comfort Inn shuttle arrives. Fastest-person wins. Guy on crutches (me) is left behind. This is at 12:25am.



Checking in at the Comfort Inn 1:01am

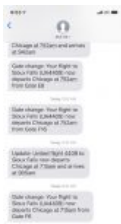
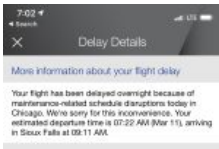
25 minutes later the shuttle returns, and the driver makes sure I get on this time. There are others from UA 4409 that are still waiting for him to make his next round. Was United unaware of the capacity issues when booking so many people from one flight into the same (smallish) hotel? It was another 20 minutes waiting to get checked in. On the way we passed many name-brand hotels with vacancy signs. This was not the only game in town. Perhaps, if I were higher level than Gold, it might have made a difference? One more final and tough-to-rationalize United act. We were told 7:52am departure when we left ORD. At 4:49am United moved up the departure to 7:15am! Bear in mind this was not a re-booking; this was our original flight. Filled only by the original UA4409 passengers. The hotel shuttles were booked solid when we arrived and besides, nobody had any way of knowing they should be getting up even earlier. Thankfully a wonderful United gate agent accepted me onto 4409, even though boarding was closed.

I lived through the Summer of Hell as well as the 'We realize you have a choice of which bankrupt airline to fly?' years and never let things get to me. But UA4409- it was like the plane/passengers that United tried to forget. Made much worse by the way a guy on crutches was treated w/regards the accommodations. It was a humbling experience for me. If this experience was within United's policies, I need to think about moving on. I do not want to move on though. United is convenient and most of my experiences are positive.

I realize my business won't make a dent in United's bottom line, but if (my experience) was within the norm for United policies, I surely wouldn't be the only one. Please convince me staying makes sense.

Respectfully,

Mike Jacoubowsky



The United Customer Service line around midnight



While waiting in the cold for a shuttle you get to look across the street to the place United COULD have booked you, and gotten at least an extra hour sleep.