



Northern Ireland

## Travel Fact Sheet: Volcanic Ash

### Introduction

Recently volcanic ash from Iceland has caused disruption to flights throughout Europe. This disruption is likely to continue to some extent whenever the ash cloud becomes sufficiently dense.

### Travel Issues

If you are hoping to fly during a period of disruption you should check with your airline before going to the airport. If you are flying with an EU based airline, or from an EU airport, and your flight is cancelled then there are EU rules which state that you must be offered a refund or the chance to rebook for a later date.

If you are already at an airport and your flight is cancelled or substantially delayed you are entitled to meals, refreshments and any necessary hotel accommodation. However, since this type of disruption is beyond the control of the airlines, there is no right under EU rules to any further compensation. You should check with your airline what they are prepared to provide.

If you are flying with a non-EU airline to a non-EU destination you are not covered by EU rules and you should check the airline's own terms and conditions. You are likely to be offered a refund or the chance to rebook.

If you booked a package holiday your tour operator is responsible for providing you with a suitable alternative holiday or a complete refund but you will need to contact them. However, if you booked your hotel and flights separately you are not covered by the package holiday rules and could face hotel cancellation charges and other costs. These may be covered by your travel insurance.

If you become stranded overseas you should contact your airline for help. If you are short of funds while abroad friends or relatives may be able to send money to you via a commercial money transfer service. If you have a serious problem contact your local embassy, High Commission or consulate for help or advice.

If you are in the UK and are worried about someone stranded overseas you can call the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice line on **0207 008 0000**.

If you have travel insurance that you bought before the disruption started you should check what cover it provides. Some travel insurance policies will cover hotel and other costs if your flight is cancelled. However, claims arising from volcanic eruptions are not always covered so you should carefully check your insurance policy and contact your insurer to find out what is actually covered and how to make a claim.

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If you paid for your holiday by credit card, there is the potential to claim against your credit card provider if you cannot recover your costs from your airline or travel insurer.

## Employment Issues

Employees who end up stranded whilst on annual leave will be wondering if they will be paid while they are away.

The law states that if the employee is unable to return after arranged annual leave the employer is not under any obligation to pay them.

Employees could choose to take the time as annual leave, meaning that they will be paid, but will be using up their holiday entitlement. All employees must keep their employer fully informed of the situation and when they can expect them to return to work. This will help their employer to make arrangements to cover that employee's responsibilities during their absence.

If the employee is travelling as part of their employment then the employer will be obliged to pay them in accordance with their contract of employment. Employees will also be entitled to claim any reasonable expenses that they would normally be due under their contract of employment.

## Further help

### Citizens Advice Bureau

Citizens Advice Bureaux give free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to help you solve problems. To find your nearest CAB visit [www.citizensadvice.co.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.co.uk) or look under C in your phone book.

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**This fact sheet was last updated in May 2010 and is reviewed on a monthly basis. If it is some time since you obtained this fact sheet, please contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau to check if it is still correct. Or visit our website [www.citizensadvice.co.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.co.uk) where you can download an up-to-date copy.**

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