

# \$1m loss for Emirates in air traffic chaos

3,500 hotel rooms provided for stranded passengers following flight cancellations due to volcanic ash clouds over northern Europe

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Dubai: Emirates is facing loss of \$1 million so far only for accommodating stranded passengers who were unable to board flights in Dubai due to widespread disruptions on Europe routes following the volcano eruption in Iceland.

Richard Vaughan, Divisional Senior Vice President, Emirates Commercial Operations Worldwide, told Gulf News in an interview that about 3,500 hotel rooms plus food and transport have been provided for travellers since Thursday.

From Saturday, Emirates will stop providing accommodation to passengers trying to board in Dubai as “in the meantime everybody planning to travel should know about the disruptions.” Emirates customers are advised to check their flight status on the Emirates website ([www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com)), which is updated every five minutes, Vaughan said. However, arriving transit passengers will still be provided with overnight accommodation.

Altogether, 38 Emirates flights have been cancelled since Thursday after the volcano ash cloud started spreading over Europe. “It is far too dangerous to fly through the cloud,” Vaughan said. “Engines might stop working as it has been the case with a British Airways plane some years ago.” The BA airliner crossed a volcanic ash cloud causing all four engines to malfunction which led the plane drop from 35,000 to 18,000 feet. “Luckily, the pilots managed to stabilise the plane.”

## [In pictures: Volcano erupts in Iceland](#)

Out of the 38 Emirates flights cancelled so far, 28 were supposed to fly to the UK, 2 to Paris, 7 to Germany and one to Moscow. 2,000 Dubai passengers and several thousand more transit passengers have been left stranded.

“We cannot say when flights will commence as it is not clear to where the ash cloud moves and when the authorities in the affected countries in Europe will reopen their air space,” Vaughan said. Also cargo operations to and from the respective airports have been halted, he added.

He confirmed that Emirates is working on contingency plans to ease the backlog of passengers after flights commence again. “I do not expect a major revenue loss as

passengers will definitely travel.” He assured that Emirates staff is doing its best to calm frustrated passengers and “get people moving”.

For any costs occurring from the flight chaos there will be no insurance coverage, neither for the airline itself nor for passengers. “This is a clear case of force majeure,” Vaughan said.

There is currently no indication of how long the situation will go on. The ash cloud on Friday was moving south-east over Europe, causing more air space being closed today in Austria and Eastern Europe. The ash dust as such is “extremely toxic”, Vaughan added. A fallout has been already registered on the ground in Scotland and Ireland, but the majority of it is still in the air. “We might expect more problems is the ash fallout starts covering larger parts of Europe.”

### **For more information**

[www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com)

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