



Interline Considerations on Irregular Operations (IROPs)



Guidance Document for Airlines



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1. Introduction and context

The global COVID-19 pandemic has led to most airlines suspending scheduled passenger operations. A need has been identified to provide a guidance document on Irregular Operations Standards and end-to-end processes in case of irregular operations and rebooking with Interline partners especially within the context of limited connectivity. This is part of the package of work built by airlines in the Interline Group around the reinvigorating of the Multilateral Framework and supporting airlines to ease the formation of new partnerships.

Establishing new interline relationships will be a vital enabler of industry recovery, providing traffic for airlines and connectivity for passengers. Airlines may need to pursue new and more varied relationships to support their networks as they recover, and to allow them to serve more origin – destination markets as their operations restart on a limited basis.

This document has been prepared by IATA with the oversight of Standards development groups under the Passenger Standards Conference. This document is based on the various existing Standards covering the Reservations, Ticketing, Sales Reporting and Billing aspects related to the handling of involuntary flight changes due to irregular operations in case of interline.

Note that, the information contained in this document is based on Resolutions and Recommended Practices as adopted at the annual Passenger Standards Conference and published in the Passenger Standards Conference Manual effective from 1 June 2020 and applicable to IATA Member Airlines, parties to the Multilateral Interline Agreement (MITA). Different Standards and rules may apply for carriers operating in and sales made in the USA. Furthermore, if bilaterally agreed, the airlines may apply different rules and exceptions to the standard procedures.

2. Overview

Disruption situations are stressful and difficult for passengers and provide an opportunity for airlines to demonstrate their ability to provide an overall excellent customer experience even in times of disruption.

Disruptions also impact customer facing, operational and back office teams within airlines. It is key to have clear and effective processes in place to ensure these situations are handled smoothly and to prioritize minimizing customer distress and inconvenience.

The following Resolutions support airline industry Standards around involuntary flight changes due to Irregular Operations (IROPs) including the interline considerations.

Resolutions	Covers
Resolutions 722f/g/h	Electronic ticket procedures
Resolutions 725/f/g/h	Electronic Miscellaneous Document procedures
Resolution 735d	Involuntary Change of Carrier, Routing, Class or Type of Fare
Resolution 735e	Procedures for Involuntary Change of Routing Enroute
Resolution 737	Refunds
Resolution 743	Found and Unclaimed Checked Baggage
Resolution 755	Re-flighting Messaging
Resolution 766	Interline Passenger Reservation Procedures
Recommended Practice 1735	Planned Schedule Changes
Revenue Accounting Manual Chapter A2, Para. 2.5 and 2.7	Involuntary Re-routings and Interline Billing Values

Member airlines may also have bilateral agreements with their partners and where bilateral agreements are not in place, re-accommodation should not occur without direct contact with the new operating carrier.

What is an irregular operation?

Irregular Operations (IROPs) are identified by an airline or ground handler acting on behalf of an airline when a disruption on the day of travel or the day prior to travel causes the customer to not be able to use the flight(s) ticketed. An Irregular Operation (IROP) may be, but is not limited to, a flight delay, cancellation, diversion due to weather, mechanical problem, landing restriction, air traffic congestion, accident/aircraft damage, security concern, immigration issue, oversold flight, boarding delay, crew shortage or other staff issues.

2.1 Types of involuntary re-route scenario

There are various types of involuntary scenario. They may occur depending on the circumstances that necessitate a change to the passenger's itinerary as originally ticketed and provided that the circumstance has not occurred earlier than one day prior to the scheduled departure time of the first impacted flight.

An involuntary reroute situation happens when:

- A member cancels a flight
- A member fails to operate a flight reasonably in accordance to schedule
- A member fails to stop at a point to which the passenger is destined or is ticketed to stop over
- A member is unable to provide previously confirmed space
- A member causes a passenger to miss a connecting flight on which he/she holds a reservation

Consequently, a change to the passenger's itinerary as original ticketed may involve a change to the routing, arrival or departure dates or carriers.

2.2 Distinguishing irregular operations from planned schedule change

The guidance on distinguishing Irregular Operations from planned schedule changes is provided by IATA Resolution 735d.

The following definition, part of the Resolution 735d is used to determine whether this Resolution applies, which impacts what actions to take immediately. *"Provided that the circumstance has not occurred earlier than one day prior to the scheduled departure time of the first impacted flight, an Involuntary Reroute occurs, and the provisions of this Resolution shall apply."*

The table below shows which carriers may be involved when an Irregular Operation occurs in case of an interline scenario:

Carrier	Definition
Original marketing carrier	Original marketing carrier means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The carrier whose airline designator is originally recorded as the transporting carrier of the affected flight coupon • In a code share situation, the Original Marketing may be different from the Original Operating Carrier
Original operating carrier	Original operating carrier means the carrier on whose flight a passenger is originally scheduled to be carried and who is responsible for the conditions which creates the need for an involuntary change in the passenger journey.
Original receiving carrier	Original receiving carrier means the carrier on whose flight a passenger is originally ticketed to be carried from a connection point.
New operating carrier/s	New operating carrier/s means the carrier selected for onward carriage from the point where an involuntary reroute became necessary, and subsequent connected carrier in the disrupted itinerary.

3. Passenger handling

In case of involuntary reroute providing a smooth passenger handling is a key aspect with a direct contribution to the overall customer experience. In this situation, the Original Marketing/Operating Carrier, or the Ticket Handler acting on their behalf, with due consideration to the passenger's reasonable interests, shall:



1. Arrange for involuntary refund in accordance with Resolution 737 (Refunds); or
2. Provide onward carriage to the destination or point of stopover named on the ticket, without additional charge to the passenger, as follows:
 - a. for a flight interruption en route on the same or another of its own aircraft;
 - b. for other than flight interruption en route on the service of the original receiving carrier;
or
 - c. on any other transportation service(s).

Misconnection

IATA Resolution 766 (Interline Passenger Reservation Procedures) states that whenever a passenger arrives at an interline point too late to make his connection, it is the responsibility of the delivering airline to cancel any continuing space that cannot be used and rebook the passenger as necessary.

Absorption of passenger's expenses

As stated in the Resolution 735d, Article 6 (Absorption of Passenger's Expenses), in an interline journey it is the responsibility of the carrier responsible for a delay (causing involuntary change of a passenger's journey) to arrange for a reasonable alternative route within a reasonable time. If that cannot be done, the airline causing the delay may need to compensate the customer for some expenses during that delay period (possibly also at downline points). These direct expenses may include hotel room, suitable meals and beverages, ground transportation, transit taxes, and reasonable communications costs necessarily incurred by the passenger because of the involuntary change.

The Recommended Practice RP1775 states that its provisions shall not apply to international intra EU traffic and shall be subject to the terms of Passenger Tariff Conference Resolution 102 (published separately). Some airlines' tariffs may also limit the conditions under which some of these provisions apply.

When a passenger's arrival at an interline connecting point is delayed, the delivering carrier shall be responsible for arranging hotel accommodations and providing other amenities as provided in the resolution.

4. Using a flight operated by another airline to re-accommodate a passenger

Where passengers are protected on other airlines services, procedures outlined in PSCM Resolutions 766 and 735d apply, subject to any regulations.

The following illustration provides high level guidelines when the disrupted carrier wishes to contact and use a new operating carrier to re-route the passenger.

Currently in the MITA agreement it is only specified that in case of involuntary rerouting, each party hereto shall be bound by the provisions of Resolution 735d.

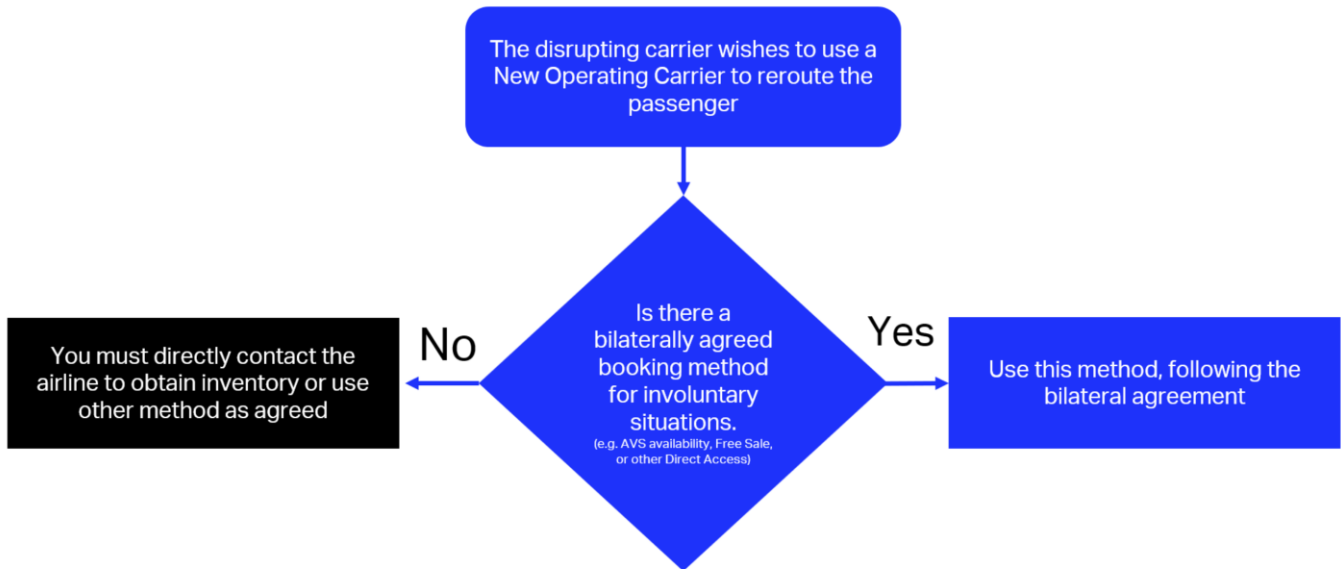


Figure 1. Obtaining Inventory from a New Operating Carrier

The carrier that has caused the disruption (the Original Operating Carrier) is responsible for obtaining inventory on a New Operating Carrier.

Where a bilateral agreement is in place between these carriers as to the method that should be used to obtain inventory, this agreed method must be followed. Where no bilateral agreement is in place, the Original operating Carrier must contact the New Operating Carrier before obtaining inventory.

This bilateral agreement may follow any form. It may include the use of messaging formats as outlined in AIRIMP 3.18, which uses the reservations action code "NI" to request inventory from the New Operating Carrier. It may include the use of existing sales agreements such as Direct Access or Sell and Report. Alternatively, it may require direct contact by telephone or email. This is entirely up to each airline.

Resolution 766, Article 12, addresses further procedures if rebooking was done using bilaterally agreed procedures. The New Operating Carrier should accept and transport the customer, provided that:

- a. the bilaterally agreed booking method has been used for obtaining inventory;
- b. the bilaterally agreed number of seats has not been exceeded.

For airlines who do not wish to include this agreement within an existing interline agreement or selling agreement (for example an interactive selling agreement) they can use a simple one-page agreement to establish a common understanding. IATA has created a template for bilateral agreements (see Appendix) however airlines can use whatever form of agreement they wish.

Upgrading to a higher compartment class (cabin class) shall not occur unless specifically permitted by the New Operating Carrier as bilaterally agreed with the Original Operating Carrier.

5. Ticketing considerations

IATA Resolution 735d states that the Original Marketing/Operating Carrier shall provide a replacement ticket that reflects the replacement flight bookings and must ensure that the ticket is immediately acceptable at check-in (including self-service and online) with the New Operating Carrier(s).

It is also under the responsibility of the Original Operating Carrier to ensure that in case another airline had been contracted for ticketing services at the location where the need for rerouting is identified, this contracted airlines (or "Ticket Handler") is responsible for the rerouting.

This procedure should be applied when the Original Marketing/Operating Carrier has been able to confirm or waitlist flight inventory with the New Operating Carrier. Also, this should be applied irrespective of the fare type (e.g. Free Ticket(s), Frequent Traveler, AWARD, IT/BT and BULK).

The following diagram summarizes the main ticketing steps to be followed and applied in case a ticket needs to be reissued/exchanged due to an involuntary reroute that has occurred in case of interline:



Figure 2. How to reissue an Interline ticket affected by an involuntary reroute



Request control of ONLY the impacted coupons:

- The airline that needs control of coupons from the original ticket requests control using an “involuntary” need indicator (as described in Resolution 735d, Article 7.5).
- Only the Validating Carrier can relinquish control of a flight coupon to another carrier. A carrier may return control only to the Validating Carrier.

Reissue impacted coupons:

- The replacement ticket should only include the coupons impacted by the rerouting – to the next point of stopover named on the original ticket.
- Coupons which are still valid (e.g., for later continuing travel or return travel) should remain in an open status on the original ticket awaiting use.

Identifying Involuntary Reroute Reissue:

- ‘INVOL’ must appear in the first 5 characters of the endorsement/restriction field
- Optionally, the characters ‘I-’ may precede the fare calculation on the reissued ticket
- The characters ‘INVOL’ shall not be used in the endorsement area of the reissued document in any other circumstances

Carrying forward original issue data:

- All information is carried forward to the reissued ticket. This includes the original Fare Calculation, Fare, Tax / Fee / Charge, equivalent fare paid and fare basis and the original baggage allowance
- In case where an involuntary change results in a change from the original connecting flight(s) and the fare basis differs on the coupon(s) affected by the disruption, the fare basis to be used on all reissued coupons shall be the fare basis of the first flight coupon affected by the disruption
- The baggage allowance to be used on all reissued coupons shall be the original baggage allowance of the first flight coupon affected by the disruption

In cases where it’s agreed bilaterally, the airline handling the rerouting may:

- a. Redirect control of the coupon (if acceptable to the Validating Carrier)
- b. Send unsolicited airport control (if they are the Validating Carrier)

The full reservations and ticketing procedures with examples are published in the IATA Ticketing Handbook available for purchase from the IATA online store.

Disruption En Route

In a disruption en route, the coupon may have been marked as checked-in/lifted or flown/used and is therefore not available for use or for reissue.

A new ticket is issued, just as would be done for other involuntary rerouting situations.



If the new ticket will replace coupons that must be exchanged as part of the reticketing, the reticketing airline will report the status of those coupons using Reissued Flown Involuntary Indicator 'D'. Otherwise, if the replacement ticket will only carry the customer to the destination point on the "lifted" flight coupon, no further message is sent (for the "reused" coupon) to the original Validating Carrier.

6. Baggage and ancillary services considerations

Resolution 735d, Article 4, requires that a customer is entitled to the baggage allowance applicable to the fare. Similarly, baggage fees applicable to the "original itinerary" apply to the new routing as it was originally ticketed.

This allowance must be reflected on the reissued ticket to minimize customer inconvenience and ensure the allowance is visible to the new Operating Carrier in its Departure Control System.

Where the original ticket has a nil baggage allowance, but the customer separately obtained a baggage allowance (for example, purchased a prepay bag), the original Operating Carrier has two options. They can either:

- a. Reissue and/or re-associate the EMD-A value coupon to the new operating carriers flight coupon (if capability exists); or
- b. Include the baggage allowance as applicable to the "original itinerary" on the reissued ticket.

RP1790 (additional services) recommends that in an IRROP, members may not involuntarily reroute additional services on to other members unless bilaterally agreed.

In these cases (where no bilateral agreement exists) the original Operating Carrier should arrange for a refund in accordance with their own conditions of carriage. This highlights the importance of leveraging automation – in these situations the customer can be automatically contacted that the ancillary they have purchased is not available, and a refund can automatically be processed. Where the customer is proactively contacted, this limits the negative experience of the customer finding out that a product is not available only when it is not delivered.

Re-flightting

IATA Resolution 755 "REFLIGHTING" addresses the process for dealing with change to a bag itinerary.

In case of a bag tagged to another destination, respectively re-flightting of mishandled bags, the baggage shall be forwarded to the LL office of the airline at the destination shown on the baggage tag using the expedite baggage tag and procedures (IATA Resolution 743). Governments may require additional screening. The FWD message shall be sent to the airline and station to which the baggage has been addressed on the Expedite Baggage Tag (RUSH).

Exceptionally, where permitted by civil aviation regulators, when an airline is forwarding for a single flight segment on their own metal and all bags are verified for the flight by scanning the baggage license plate, then a RUSH tag need not be affixed.

The rules around Re-flight messaging are covered in detail in IATA Resolution 755.

7. Taxes, Billing and Settlement

Involuntary Reroute Billing

The Revenue Accounting Manual prescribes Standards for Interline billing for IATA members and those carriers concurring to the Multilateral Interline Traffic Agreement (MITA).

The following diagram (extracted from the RAM Chapter A2, section 2.7) illustrates the flow and main steps applicable from a billing and settlement perspective between Interline partners when a disruption has occurred, distinguishing between the criteria and conditions applicable in an involuntary reroute comparing to the ones applicable in case of a planned schedule change.

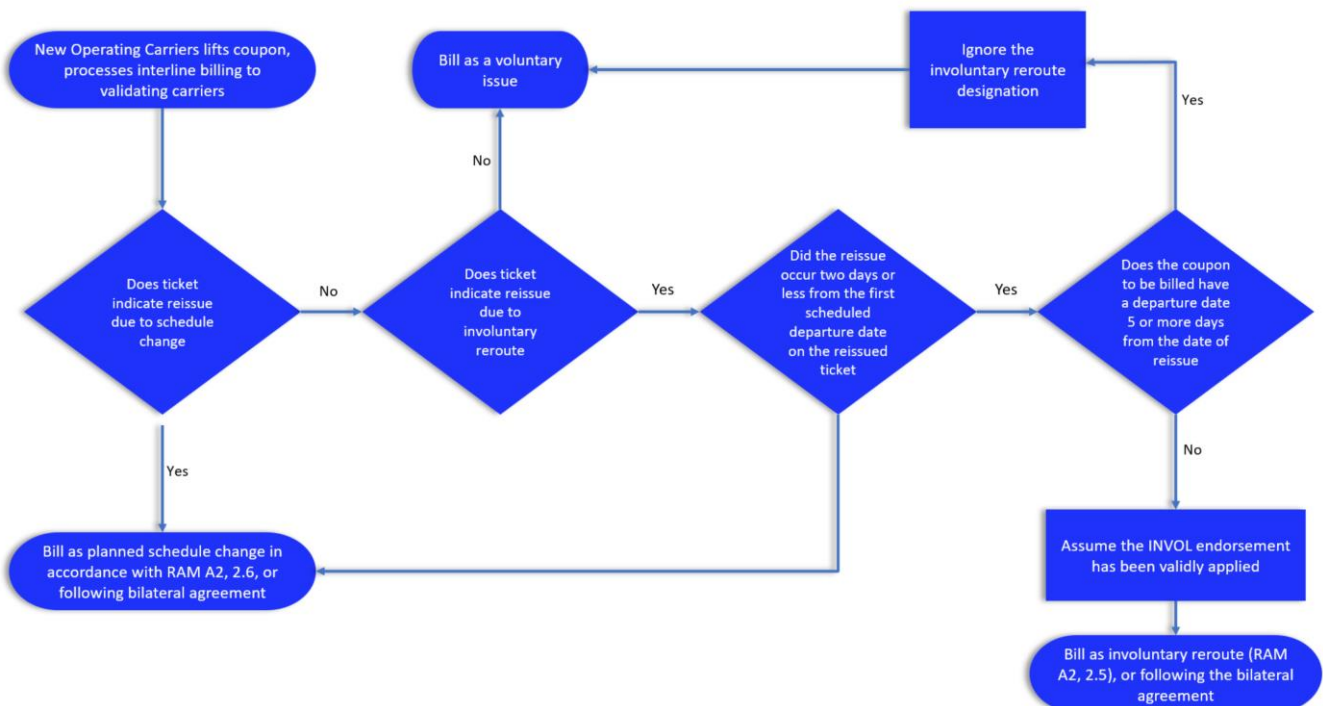


Figure 3. Involuntary Reroute and Planned Schedule Change Flow Chart



The 2 days rule and 5 days rule

The 2 days and 5 days rules aim to support the billing carrier to better determine which rules shall be applied when billing the reissued ticket in accordance to RAM chapter A2. The following definitions shall be used and applied by the billing carrier (according to RAM chapter 2, paragraph 2.5):

- *“Sectors on the reissued ticket may only be recognized as involuntary rerouting when the reissued ticket has an issue date 2 days or less from the first scheduled departure date”*
- *“An involuntary designation shall be considered invalid for any coupon on the reissued ticket with a scheduled departure date 5 or more days from the issue date of the reissued ticket. When counting the number of days for this procedure, the calendar day following the date of the reissued ticket shall be day one.”*

The Multilateral Prorate Agreement (MPA) also defines industry Standards for proration in Involuntary Rerouting scenarios.

Carriers may bilaterally agree to follow different Standards in determining billing values in Involuntary Rerouting scenarios.

When available, coupons are reissued in an involuntary reroute scenario, the remaining coupon values are shared by New Operating Carriers, as described in the MPA.

Taxes

With the below mentioned RAM Involuntary RAM Changes (RAM A2 1.8.2.2) that have been effective from 1st April 2020, the taxes which arise for the new routing shall be applicable for billing regardless of collection which simplifies the Interline billings for involuntary reroutes.

Based on these specifications, for involuntary changes, the TFC amounts published in the IATA Revenue Accounting Tax Database (RATD) arising from the revised routing shall be deemed applicable. Furthermore, exemptions filed in the RATD relating to involuntary changes shall be applied irrespective of the reason.

The determination of applicable TFC must be based on the complete ticket data of the revised routing, including both the “From/To” panel and “Good for Passage” sections, and the “Fare calculation” area, if available.

Simplified Involuntary Reroute Settlement

The Airlines Clearing House has partnered with ATPCO and Accelya to provide a Simplified Involuntary Reroute Settlement process for worldwide application supported by IATA.



This involves a Multilateral Agreement with airline signatories to apply established billing values calculated independently on current sales information and applied to weighted mileage factors.

Members may concur with others to agree to apply the billing values to involuntary reroute billings.

Resolution 735d, for the purposes of Interline settlement:

- Members shall assume that the INVOL endorsement has been validly applied for any document reissue that occurs within two days of the day of the scheduled departure of the first impacted flight. These shall be processed in accordance with the Revenue Accounting Manual.
- For any coupon with a scheduled departure date five or more days from the issue date of the reissued ticket, paragraph 7.4.3.1 shall not apply and the INVOL endorsement shall be considered invalid.
- Members shall assume that the INVOL endorsement has been applied in error on any document reissue that occurs outside of two days of the day of the scheduled departure of the first impacted flight and assume that the reissue was the result of a planned schedule change.

Proration considerations in case of IROPS

For involuntary rerouting settlement there are 2 proration iterations. First, the airline needs to prorate the first ticket in order to identify the value that would have accrued to the Original Carrier, then needs to prorate this value across the relevant coupons on the second ticket.

In the first proration, provisos will be applied and in the second proration, straight rate proration (SRP) will be applied only on the coupons that are affected by the involuntary rerouting.

8. Involuntary rerouting in times of limited or restricted connectivity

A coordinated approach between ground and flight operations, reservations center and ticketing to rebook and re-ticket disrupted passengers will lead to better irregular operations planning and easier passenger handling and notification.

Airline causing disruption may need to:

- look at inbound and outbound connecting passenger lists
- determine how many passengers will need to be re-accommodated
- cancel any continuing space that cannot be used
- keep passengers informed
- arrange for involuntary refund if passenger refuses re-accommodation.



Airline causing disruption must ensure that passenger is rebooked and re-ticketed, which may be completed on own services or may require liaising with interline partners so that the passengers can check-in on the new Operating Carrier.

It is assumed that an airline's established Interline Agreements are reflective of both a carrier's commercial agreements to carry passengers beyond an airline's own network to destinations they may not serve directly and agreements to handle flight disruptions to get passengers to their final destinations in times of irregular operations.

Under certain circumstances the expected route networks of interline partners may be dramatically reduced thus affecting the ability to efficiently re-route passengers to their destination.

The existing Multilateral Interline Agreement (MITA) continues to enable carriers to form Interline Agreements in order to maximize the network connectivity to the largest extent possible to the benefit of passengers. Where this is not possible, due consideration may be given to forming bilateral agreements in a simplified framework, purely for the purposes of passenger re-routing in an involuntary situation.

IATA Resolution 780 is the framework industry agreement for Multilateral Interlining and covers such topics as the provision of fares and schedules and the acceptance of passengers and their baggage as well as Interline billing and baggage handling and claims. It assumes the use of electronic tickets and Interline reservations procedures in accordance with established Standards.

Whilst the IATA Standards form the basis of many long-established Interline relationships it is acknowledged that many carriers may not follow these Standards since they operate under a different model (e.g. Ticketless).


However, during times of limited connectivity carriers may wish to consider entering relationships for the purpose of ensuring enough connectivity to continue offering enough and effective involuntary rerouting opportunities.

Whilst no Standards exist to support this type of Interline relationship it is suggested that any bilateral agreement may include articles covering:

- Procedures on how and when to contact the other party to obtain space
- Procedures for the transfer and carriage of the affected passengers and their baggage
- Procedures for the handling of accountable forms (e.g. ticketless vs. ticket carrier)
- Procedures for the billing and settlement of amounts for flown passengers

Appendix

Utilities

Category	Description
IATA Inventory Agreement	 Inventory Agreement Template v1.0.odt

Other publications and extracts from existing Resolutions providing extensive details and examples on Involuntary Rerouting

Name	Section
Ticketing Handbook	Chapter 7—Involuntary Rerouting

The below flowchart of the Resolution 735d, Attachment A, summarizes the flow and conditions when the Resolution 735d shall occur and what are the key steps to be followed in obtaining the inventory from the New Operating Carrier and making the reservation and ticketing changes.

