

August 8, 2011

Mr. Ronald Amundson
441 Haili St.
Hilo, HI 96720

Dear Mr. Amundson:

This letter is written in response to your correspondence to the U.S Department of Transportation (DOT) concerning your experience at the Hilo, Hi airport on July 16, 2011 when you arrived on flight 1663 from San Francisco, CA. We also received a report from the station outlining the same situation you have described. I sincerely regret that your personal wheelchair was not returned to you at the arrival gate as you expected, and for any negative impression your interaction with our ground staff may have left with you.

According to your comments, your chair was tagged to be returned to you at the arrival gate at each of your connecting points and at your final destination. There was no reason for you to believe that there would be any problem with the color of the gate check tag attached to your chair. However, upon your arrival into Hilo, your chair was not delivered to the gate; it was sent to the baggage claim area instead. Our representative told you that it would be necessary for a porter to take you to the baggage claim area in an airport wheelchair. When you protested, our representative said that your wheelchair was most likely not properly tagged for gate delivery and that once a wheelchair has been delivered to the baggage claim area it was legally prohibited from being returned to the gate.

You felt you had no choice, so you allowed an attendant to take you to the baggage claim area in a Continental wheelchair, and when you were reunited with your personal wheelchair it and when you were reunited with your personal wheelchair, it was still tagged with a white gate check tag that was provided by United Airlines personnel. You called our representative to the baggage claim area in order to show him this tag and he agreed that your chair was designated for gate delivery, but proceeded to tell you that only items with a pink tag are delivered to the gate on Continental flights, and since the tag affixed to your chair was white it did not qualify. He placed the blame for this situation on our ground staff in San Francisco; nevertheless, you disagree with his explanation and you believe that your rights as a customer with disabilities were violated.

Mr. Amundson, concerns of this nature are not taken lightly and upon receipt of your comments we contacted our airport management staff in Hilo asking them to review this matter with the representatives you encountered that day and provide us with their recollection of the described events.

Mr. Amundson
August 8, 2011
Page 2

Our general manager discussed this with the station supervisor and learned that when our ramp personnel were initially trained, it was our policy to only deliver items with pink special handling tags from Continental to the arrival gate and/or aircraft door. In this instance, when the ramp staff unloaded your wheelchair they did not recognize the white tag from United Airlines as something they needed to take action with, and they delivered your wheelchair to the baggage claim area. The baggage claim area is in the unsecured part of the airport, so your wheelchair could not be brought right back to the aircraft; however, our general manager has determined that when our staff learned of the discrepancy, they should have retrieved your wheelchair from baggage claim, brought it through the Transportation Security Administrations (TSA) security checkpoint and delivered it to you at the arrival gate. Of course, this process would have taken some time to accomplish, but it was a viable alternative.

Our general manager has informed me that he will take the following actions in an effort to prevent this from happening again at this station. He will personally bring a sample of United Airlines special handling tags to the Hilo station and will conduct training sessions with our ground staff and ramp personnel so there will be no confusion in the future. He will also counsel our staff on what actions should have been taken once the problem was identified and brought to our employees' attention.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) 14 CFR Part 382.125(c), air carriers are required to provide for the checking and timely return of a passengers' wheelchair as close as possible to the door of the aircraft so that the passenger may use his or her own equipment to the extent possible, and in this case we failed to meet this obligation. However, this matter has been addressed and corrected at the station level and I assure you it will not happen again.

Mr. Amundson, again, I am sorry for the negative impression this matter has left with you, and as a gesture of our sincere concern, I have enclosed an Electronic Travel Certificate which may be applied toward your next ticket purchase with us. Additionally if you feel I have not clearly understood or properly addressed all of your concerns, or you simply wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me directly at 832-235-1821. Please know that your business is very important to us and we are committed to regaining your confidence in our services.

Sincerely,



Bettie Norval
Corporate CRO - Disability Specialist