

# TENS OF THOUSANDS OF FLIGHTS WILL BE CANCELED IN FRANCE



Due to a software update in the air traffic control system, numerous flights will be canceled in France at the beginning of 2024. Airlines must cancel one-fifth of their flights for six weeks, from January 9 to February 14, 2024. This represents thousands of planes grounded by some airlines, such as Air France. The President of the Board of Airlines Representatives in France, Jean-Pierre Sauvage, explained that this schedule change is related to implementing new software for air traffic control. He also pointed out that air traffic control procedures have been semi-automated since the 1970s and must be updated. Due to a software update at the air traffic control level, many flights will be canceled in France at the start of 2024.

From January 9 to February 14, 2024, companies will have to cancel one-fifth of their flights, which means thousands of planes will be grounded, especially for airlines like Air France. This sudden change is related to air traffic control and the implementation of new software, as explained by Jean-Pierre Sauvage, the president of the Board of Airlines Representatives in France. He emphasized that air traffic control has been semi-automated since the 1970s. These procedures are more than 50 years old and require modernization.

To manage the three million air movements annually, with about half of them being overflights, French air traffic control is organized into five Air Navigation Enroute Centers (CRNA). These centers are located in Reims, Aix-en-Provence, Brest, Bordeaux, and Athis-Mons near Orly, with the latter being the most important. From January 9 to February 14, the center in Athis-Mons will test the newly developed software to enhance air traffic control before final implementation on November 5, 2024.

## **Canceled flights are still in GDS**

The software has been almost completely implemented in Reims and Aix. However, the major part of the implementation is still pending since the CRNA of Athis-Mons is responsible for managing the airports of CDG, Orly, Beauvais, and Le Bourget for business trips. Air traffic control in France is a sensitive matter as it significantly impacts the entire continent of Europe.

As a measure to facilitate new software implementation, airlines are required to cancel 20% of their flight slots. The Cohor, which coordinates the timetables of French airports, has requested volunteers from companies to submit a list of the flights they wish to cancel. However, companies that fail to submit the list themselves will have it imposed on them authoritarily.

## **Nearly 150 companies concerned**

Due to the new restrictions, companies must choose between domestic or intra-European flights. However, long-haul flights are not likely to be affected. Many companies are expected to reschedule their flights to other destinations. In response to the new measures, Cohor expressed gratitude to the 150 operators (airlines) who accepted the collective effort despite the significant impact on their respective activities.

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