

50 Claims to Be Settled by Aeroflot

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Aeroflot is ready to settle out of court 50 compensation claims from passengers left stranded by the transport collapse at Sheremetyevo Airport in December, a lawyer for claimants said Monday.

Aeroflot's offer of vouchers in exchange for missed and delayed flights to all passengers has been criticized for not equaling the full value of a ticket, and for creating a tax liability for the recipient.

Lawyer Sergei Zhorin, who is representing 50 individual claims against the airline amounting to 10 million rubles (\$345,000), said he received a letter on Friday inviting him to submit a register of claims in preparation for an out-of-court settlement.

"We're pleased at Aeroflot's move, but we submitted these claims over a month ago and they've only responded now," Zhorin said by telephone Monday.

About 20,000 air travelers were stranded at Moscow's Sheremetyevo and Domodedovo

airports between Dec. 26 and 29 as a result of freezing rain.

Passengers vented anger at being left without food, information or support at Aeroflot's Sheremetyevo hub.

The lawyer said he would not cancel any of the lawsuits until an agreement on compensation has been reached.

Zhorin said he had received a similar response from Transaero concerning claims his clients have made against that airline, which operates out of Domodedovo.

Sergei Livintsev, a lawyer leading a separate class action lawsuit against Aeroflot representing 600 claimants, welcomed Zhorin's success.

"We've heard nothing from Aeroflot ourselves; but our claims are pretty much the same and if it has happened for them [Zhorin's clients] it will probably happen for us too," Livintsev told the Moscow Times on Monday.

Livintsev's class action is seeking 100,000 rubles to 150,000 rubles compensation per claimant, depending on the number of hours spent waiting.

Aeroflot did not respond to requests to comment Monday.

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