When plans change

Supporting your crew's safety decisions | Private aviation client briefing

Private jet charter offers flexibility, privacy and control over your travel arrangements. Every journey, however, remains subject to weather, aircraft condition, airport suitability and crew operating limits.

When a captain recommends delaying, diverting or cancelling a flight, that decision deserves your support - even when the inconvenience is considerable.

The pressure to proceed

An important meeting, a family occasion or a connection can make arriving on time feel essential. Having committed to a private charter, it is understandable to expect the journey to proceed as arranged.

But expectations can create pressure, even unintentionally. Comments such as “we absolutely have to get there” or “the other aircraft managed it” can make a difficult operational decision harder. The FAA recognises passenger expectations and pressure to meet a schedule as factors pilots must manage in their decision-making.

“Our schedule matters, but you have our full support to make the safe decision.”

Why another aircraft may be able to fly

Another aircraft departing or landing does not establish that your flight should proceed. Aircraft capabilities, crew qualifications, runway conditions, destination weather and the timing of the flight may differ.

Conditions at your departure airport also tell only part of the story. The crew must consider the route, destination and suitable alternatives.

What clients should expect

When disruption occurs, you should expect a clear explanation of the constraint, an indication of when the situation will next be reviewed, and practical alternatives where available. These might include a later departure, a different airport with a ground transfer, a revised route or an overnight stay.

An alternative aircraft may sometimes help, but any replacement requires its own operational assessment. It should never be presented as a guaranteed way around a safety concern.

How you can help

• Share essential arrival times and onward commitments when booking, so contingency options can be considered early.

• Allow extra time for occasions where arriving late would have serious consequences.

• Ask, “What safe alternatives are available?” when plans change.

• Support the captain’s decision to delay, divert or cancel, including after the journey has begun.

• Encourage assistants, guests and colleagues travelling with you to give the crew the same support.

Professional judgment is part of the service

A captain’s willingness to say “we need to wait” is an important part of the expertise you are paying for. Good service includes clear communication, thoughtful contingency planning and the confidence to make an unwelcome decision when circumstances require it.

Your time is valuable. Your safety takes priority.

Reference: FAA Safety Team, Flight Risk Assessment Tool (FRAT). faa.gov/general/flight-risk-assessment-tool-frat-faa-safety-team