



Air Cargo: American Airlines Pulls Cargo Capacity from the Skies, Too

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By Patrick Burnson

SAN FRANCISCO—With the cancellation of more than 900 flights by American Airlines yesterday, shippers might expect a profound disruption in cargo distribution. But the industry is resilient enough to get through it, said Brandon Fried, executive director, [Airforwarders Association](#).

“Our people are out-of-the-box thinkers, and know how to improvise when something like this occurs,” he said. “We have been through similar episodes with United Airlines and Southwest, so shippers have a response system that is pretty reliable.”

Expedited ground services have been a popular alternative lately, too, said Fried, thereby mitigating the sudden withdrawal of a major air carrier.

“This is a highly flexible business,” he said, “and forwarders can adjust quickly to episodes like this. Fortunately, inventories are pretty lean right now, which softens the impact of this event.”

Nor does Fried blame the FAA: “Aircraft has to be maintained. It’s a fact of life,” he said. Fried also observed that American Airlines appeared to be addressing the issue quickly, and would likely have planes back in the air soon.

Indeed, American Airlines executives have been both contrite and responsible about the incident, promising to fix the problems cited by the Federal Aviation Administration during recent inspections MD-80s -- the most backbone of American's 655-plane fleet.

Shippers doing business with Alaska Airlines may also be affected by the FAA decision, as its own more modest fleet of MD-80s has also been pulled for retrofitting.

“The problem with the bundling of wires in the backup power system for the fuel pump is not that hard to repair,” said Fried. “Meanwhile, other air cargo providers will pick up the slack. It’s a highly stratified business.”