



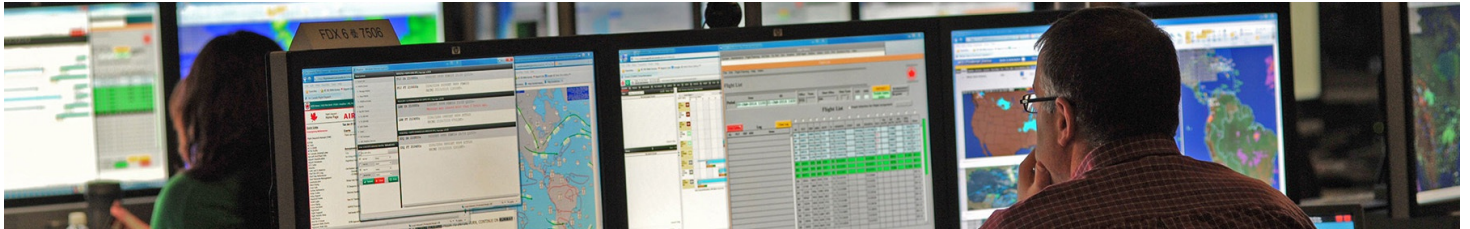
AIR CANADA

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At Air Canada, System Operations Control is always watching out for you



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The security briefings are over, you are safely fastened in your seat and the pilot throttles up the powerful jet engines to speed down the runway and into the skies toward New York City.

It all seems quite simple, but the truth is planning for the flight to the Big Apple started hours before you – or the flight crew – were at the airport, thanks to a team of employees located in a nondescript building in Brampton, Ontario, that houses Air Canada's System Operations Control – or SOC.

"SOC brings together hundreds of employees from many different departments who plan and monitor all Air Canada flights around the world, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year," says Kevin O'Connor, Vice President, Systems Operations Control at Air Canada. "SOC is the nerve centre for the 1,800 daily flights Air Canada operates to and from six continents around the world."

If you want to picture the SOC in your head, imagine how Hollywood depicts NASA's launch control and you would be close to reality.

While you were sitting on the plane in preparation for departure for New York, it made a quick detour through the airport's de-icing facility to make sure all that snow was clear of the wings. There's a dedicated team at SOC that is constantly monitoring the weather – always a critical factor, especially during the winter in Canada.

Employees at SOC are responsible for weight and balance, crew scheduling, dispatching and more. They also watch world events like natural disasters, hurricanes, earthquakes, civil unrest and airport strikes. Basically, everything in the world that could affect air travel.

And when you experience some light turbulence on the way to NYC while watching *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, it probably wasn't as bad as it could have been thanks to the flight dispatcher.

They play a critical role in the process as they are the ones who plan the flight path, then monitor the flight while it is in the air until it lands safely at its destination. The dispatcher is in constant contact with the crew, alerting them to any issues they should be aware of or avoid, such as bad weather or closed airspace.

"A flight dispatcher would have two main roles. The first one is we do the flight planning. So the day of, we'll plan the route, we'll avoid weather, any operational restrictions, airspace closures. So that's kind of the first job that we do. The second one is flight following. So once the aircraft is active, it'll go airborne, we talk to the crews that are on board and we'll reroute them around any unforecasted weather or turbulence," says Lauren Moore, a Flight Dispatcher at Air Canada.

In the event weather, or any other issues, causes flight delays or cancellations that might result in missed flights or connections, there's always someone at the SOC watching out for you. The Manager Passenger Movement is always advocating for you, making sure that the operational decisions always take into account any special considerations for passengers – perhaps a school group on a special trip or a couple on their way to get married.

"Manager of passenger movement is basically the advocate for the customer. We monitor and watch over the passengers worldwide of all our stations in the system and ensure that they complete their journey without any disruption, and basically be the conscience of the airline," says Ilana Menn, Manager, Passenger Movement at Air Canada.

Wintertime adds another layer of complexity to SOC's job, as snow storms force airports to reduce takeoffs and landings, or even shut down completely, wreaking havoc on airline schedules. Even without a storm, de-icing can also cause delays.

SOC acts in advance when it sees a storm coming. A rebooking policy is put in place, then a travel advisory is issued and our customers are notified.

SOC will also reduce Air Canada's schedule by cancelling or consolidating flights because in a storm an airport cannot handle all the flights originally planned. The idea is that where normally we might fly 100 flights in a day from the airport, we may only be given enough takeoff slots to fly 75, so we selectively use those slots to move as many people as possible.

SOC will also move passengers onto other flights that we expect will still fly. Where we can, we will fly one large aircraft where normally we might have two smaller ones; or we might consolidate two flights going to the same destination that day if neither is very full.

And if you notice that the plane you are on headed to New York is bigger than the one you are accustomed to, that's likely because SOC has upgauged the aircraft when it saw that a lot of customers were looking to take a particular flight. Sometimes, if there are enough people needing to travel, SOC will put on an additional flight.

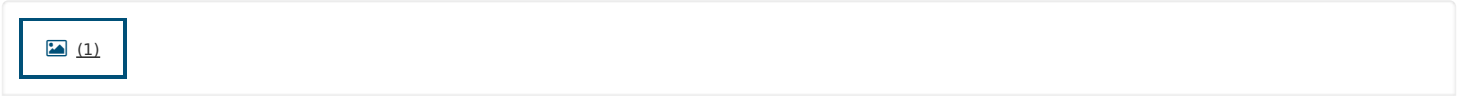
"In deciding which flights operate and which are cancelled, priority goes to those flights with many connecting customers and large international flights. We also prioritize sun destinations since we know people want to go on holiday, and sometimes we may only have one flight a week to a Caribbean Island, as well as flights with customers going on cruises who must reach their ships before they sail," O'Connor says.

And even after the storm has passed, SOC's work never stops. Delays can cause a ripple effect down the line, and SOC's priority

is getting passengers to their destination as safely and quickly as possible. And even if it's nice and sunny in Vancouver, the storm that snarled air traffic in Toronto can still affect you if the planes can't get where they need to be.

The first thing that is done is getting the aircraft back into position so they can fly stranded customers to their destinations. But while doing that, Air Canada's normal operations must continue for the next day's regularly scheduled flights.

So, the next time you board a flight, remember that someone at Air Canada's SOC is always watching over you no matter where you are.



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