

Fast Fact Friday

Aircraft Downgrades

Friday, October 18, 2024

Contract 2024 introduced protections specific to the “D” Flight Attendant when a downgrade occurs on their pairing. In the past, when a downgrade happened, the “D” could be made to work another position, while the most senior Flight Attendant was changed to DH. Thanks to changes in our new Pink CBA, when a downgrade affects all four positions, the “D” Flight Attendant will now be released (Article 9.3.C) or deadhead on a smaller aircraft (Article 9.3.D).

Q1: “What is an aircraft downgrade?”

A downgrade is when a flight that is scheduled on a 737-800 or 737 MAX8 but is switched to a 737-700.

Q2: “Why would an aircraft be downgraded?”

Mechanical issues are the most common reason our planes are downgraded (or upgraded). Sometimes a plane is taken out of service and the only available replacement aircraft is a smaller type. SWA Dispatch is tasked with deciding whether the operation is best covered by downgrading an aircraft type.

Q3: “Since a 737-700 only requires three (3) Flight Attendants, what happens to the Crew when a downgrade occurs?”

If a reschedule doesn’t occur, the “D” Flight Attendant will deadhead, and the “A”, “B” and “C” Flight Attendants will work their assigned positions on the flight. The “D” Flight Attendant will now deadhead, and the “A”, “B” and “C” Flight Attendants will work their assigned positions on the flight.

Q4: “I just checked in for a turn in the “D” position only to find out my plane has been downgraded for both flights of the turn. What now?”

Contact Crew Scheduling. If they do not have a reschedule for you, then you will be released to return home, and paid cancellation pay for the turn.

Q5: “I am flying “B” position, and our aircraft was just downgraded. Since I am 15 years senior to the “D” Flight Attendant, can I “pull rank” and deadhead instead?”

Absolutely not. Seniority does not allow you to “take” someone’s deadhead from them in any situation.

