

ABR project at the finish line: New carrier based baggage rules come into effect on 1 April

On 31 March 2011 the old IATA interline standard baggage rules and charges as set out in Resolution 300/301 expire. These baggage rules were based on simple default baggage allowances by weight or piece. On 1 April, they will be replaced by carrier based baggage rules, established in Resolution 302.

What is the rationale behind adopting the new carrier based baggage rules? More and more airlines are defining their own baggage allowances and charges depending on the number of bags checked, class of travel, routings, etc. This adds complexity for travel agents, check-in agents and interline partners, who are unable to correctly assess carrier baggage policies. The old standard approach to defining baggage allowances and related charges are out of date, especially for interline journeys. A new standard, Resolution 302, has therefore been defined in order to respond to this market transformation, but its adoption is too complex to be manually handled correctly.

The Board mandated IATA in June 2010 to mobilize the industry with the goal of automating baggage rules within ten months. In cooperation with ATPCO and system providers IATA raised awareness, mobilized and supported the industry. Examples include Task Force Meetings, an Implementation Guide and a transition document to provide change management guidance.

Nearly all GDSs are technically ready. But we expect that not all of them will be live on 1 April. In addition, some airlines will not have submitted or released their baggage rules to ATPCO by the deadline. Hence, we will not have full industry baggage automation on 1 April. But we do not expect major issues or operational disruptions.

Interline baggage charges apply to a small percentage of the travelling public and the industry is continuing rapid progress to close the remaining gaps. However, it is important that carriers endeavor to close such gaps by ensuring their information is fully updated in the current functionality that is provided in the GDSs, e.g direct reference sources, and/or on their websites. In addition, airlines should provide complete instructions to their travel agents on their baggage rules, policies and charges on and after 1 April.

IATA's ABR Project Team will continue to work with the industry beyond 1 April 2011 to ensure a rapid expansion of baggage automation as per Resolution 302. For questions please email the ABR Team at abr@iata.org.