

To Whom It May Concern;

As the parent of a 10-year-old, with a life-threatening peanut allergy, I would like to provide input on how he, and others with food allergies, can be accommodated in all areas of travel. I understand that Food Allergy Canada will provide input, which I completely agree with, but the following input is based on our experience.

While accommodation for all modes of transport are important and necessary, I'm considerably more concerned about air travel due to the lack of time a person having an allergic reaction/anaphylaxis, would have to obtain the necessary medical care. I also think it is extremely important that pre-boarding security be included alongside air travel when considering regulations as they are part and parcel of the whole air travel process.

Currently, if one is in a wheelchair they are entitled to move through security in shorter lines, etc. due to the pre-boarding time/accommodation required. This is not currently offered to people with food allergies yet their accommodation regarding pre-boarding should be the same, if not more, given the circumstances/risk.

While I think it is fantastic that none of the Canadian airlines offer many of the high-risk allergens to clients on their flights (and in some cases offer allergy buffer zones if enough notice is provided), there is always the potential that clients will have brought these allergens on the plane from home/retailers, have eaten them in the seat where the allergic person will not have to sit, etc.

People with life-threatening allergies should be allowed to pre-board at least 10 minutes prior to others in order to clean the entire area where the person will be sitting, due to the risk of contamination in the area by previous passengers prior to boarding. Today, an airline might choose to accommodate this if requested, but it is not a requirement/guarantee. Not getting held up in security lines to prevent pre-boarding and pre-boarding allow the allergic traveller peace of mind and more security that their risk of contamination from prior passengers in their seat has been dramatically reduced.

It would be extremely beneficial if it was made mandatory that Canadian airlines announce when someone is on board with a life-threatening allergy and make the three-row area where they are sitting, an allergen-free buffer zone, with no prior arrangement required. Just as critical, would be the necessity to advise people in this zone of the circumstances as soon as they are seated in this zone/once entering the plane. Two reasons for this: 1) so they do not begin to eat the allergen before even being addressed by airline staff regarding the buffer zone compliance, and 2) it gives these passengers an opportunity to change seats with others should they find this difficult to comply with for some reason.

Currently, Canadian airlines are generally good about offering the above but it is at their discretion and pre-boarding has been particularly difficult to accommodate for some reason? Buffer zones have to be pre-arranged, they may or may not choose to make an announcement to other passengers, and they tend to only speak to passengers in the buffer zone regarding refraining from the allergen after everyone has been seated, which gives a 10 - 20 minute timeframe for the allergen to be eaten, making the buffer zone almost null and void!

Unfortunately, the general public is not very educated regarding allergies and tend to think they are exaggerations, that they do not have to listen to what is being requested and/or the risk is not as high and deadly as it can be. Having the CTA accommodate/mandate what is certainly a disability for these people in the smallest of ways - as is currently being done for other disabilities - will go a very long way to helping allergic citizens to feel safer when travelling.

Regards,
Leslie Milne