

The Washington Post

[Automation problem led to ground stop for United Airlines](#)

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July 8, 2015

A mandatory delay by United Airlines that lasted for almost two hours Wednesday morning affected 4,900 flights worldwide, causing thousands of passengers to miss connecting flights and snarling air travel.

A warning that the airline was facing an “automation issue” led the Federal Aviation Administration to issue what is known as a ground stop until the matter could be resolved. The airline said passengers who had to change their plans because of the grounding would not be charged the normal fees for such changes.

“Although the FAA has lifted the grounding ban on all United Airline flights, the travel disruption that occurred this morning will still cause a massive interruption for business travel,” said Mike Kelly of the travel risk management company On Call International. “Any time that there is an airline travel issue such as this morning’s, the trickle-down effect that it causes tends to impact business travelers and their employers for days if not weeks afterwards until operations return to normal.”

At noon Eastern time, flight tracking system FlightAware showed major delays continuing at midday in United’s three domestic hub airports, in Chicago, Denver and Houston. United asked the FAA to implement a nationwide ground stop for its airplanes at 8 a.m. and then asked the FAA to lift it at 9:49 a.m.

Shortly before the mandatory delay was lifted, the FAA said in an advisory that the ground stop was for United Airlines “mainline” only flights. It said that subcarriers for United “have been released from the ground stop.”

Several United flights also were [grounded nationwide last month](#).

United Airlines did not immediately post details about the cause of Wednesday’s problems. A phone call and e-mail to the airline were not immediately returned.

In a statement, United said: “We experienced a network connectivity issue this morning. We are working to resolve this and apologize to our customers for any inconvenience.”

The airline is one of the biggest in the country, serving about 16 million passengers a day.