

Press release

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SAS and CPH: Legislation should be changed

SAS and Copenhagen Airports A/S (CPH) now appeal to the politicians to prevent a recurrence of the chaos that hit air transport after last Sunday's snowstorm. The parties are asking the Danish Transport Minister to change legislation so that it will be possible to use the runway that was closed during the night between Sunday and Monday. A permission to use that runway would have relieved a large part of the consequences of the snowstorm.

The runway – 12/30 – which cuts across the other runways, cannot be used for take-offs during the period from 11.00 p.m. to 6.00 a.m. for environmental reasons. Danish legislation does not allow exemptions from the ban on take-offs using runway 12/30, even in situations like last Sunday evening when the wind direction prevented the use of the other runways. SAS and CPH would like to see these strict rules changed.

Just before the cross runway was closed, aircraft carrying close to 1,000 passengers were ready for take-off. However, passengers, baggage, crews and aircraft had to return to the gates. This started a dramatic snowball effect which affected a large number of passengers over the next few days.

- It is very frustrating as CEO of the airport operator not to be able to let the airlines use a runway when the aircraft and passengers are all ready for departure. It is just like being captain of a ship that sails by passengers left in a lifeboat and not having the authority to help them, says Niels Boserup, President & CEO of Copenhagen Airports.

- We will now appeal to the Danish Transport Minister to ask him to help us avoid situations like the one we faced last Sunday says, Lars Andersen, Director of SAS responsible for SAS' relations with the Danish Authorities. We fully understand that there must be severe restrictions on the use of the runway, but a situation like last Sunday's is a very rare occurrence. We would like to treat passengers more decently than we were able to on that occasion. It must be in everyone's interest that we are authorised to use the runway in such extreme situations. At the same time, we are very much aware that the inconvenience to people living near the airport must be limited as much as at all possible. We are working closely with CPH as we both have a great interest in having this rule changed.

- The employees of both SAS and CPH worked as hard as they could to solve the many difficulties caused by the weather situation. But let's not fool ourselves or the passengers – no matter how professional our contingency plans are, we cannot prevent inconvenience to passengers in such an extreme weather situation, Lars Andersen and Niels Boserup agree.

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