What you need to know if there is a Cyberattack at the airport, by Caroline Morse Teel

Nine hours before my flight from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SeaTac) was due to depart, I got an email from the airline that my flight was delayed. I was annoyed since the weather was clear both in Seattle and at my destination but didn't really think too much about it – until I checked the news and saw that the airport was under a Cyberattack.

Cyberattacks on American airports are not a new phenomenon. Major hubs like Los Angeles, Chicago, and Atlanta have all fallen victim in the past, and such incidents are likely to continue, potentially causing significant travel disruptions. The tips that I learned from my experience could help you if you are flying out of an airport that has been hit by a Cyberattack.

Check Social Media for updates: There was minimal news coverage of what was happening at the airport and I found the most accurate and up-to-date information on SeaTac's X (Twitter) account. If you hear about a Cyberattack, check the official social media accounts for the airport and your airline to find out what is happening.

If you are not at the airport yet and want to know how chaotic it is, searching for hashtags related to the incident can show you real-time videos and stories from travelers already there that will help you know what to expect.

Monitor your flight Status: About an hour after being notified that my flight was delayed, I got another email letting me know that my flight was back to its originally scheduled time. You should monitor your flight status closely and plan to be at the airport for your original departure time in case anything changes.

I flew out on the first day of the Cyberattack, when 165 flights were delayed and six were canceled. My flight was delayed about an hour, but the delay was never announced again. When computer systems are down, there can be lags in notifying passengers about departure time changes.

Allow Extra Time at the Airport: During a Cyberattack, computer systems will be down, and passengers and luggage will have to be checked in manually. Even TSA screening may have to be done manually in some cases (in my case, I was able to go through TSA Precheck as normal) which can take a significant amount of extra time.

Check into your Flight Online: Fortunately, I had already checked in online and saved my boarding pass before the Cyberattack struck. Check-in lines at the airport were extremely long for people who did not check-in online, so avoid doing this if you can. Print your ticket at home (or save your mobile boarding pass to your phone) as you won't be able to print your pass at an airport kiosk.

Do not check a bag: Avoid checking a bag at all costs during a Cyberattack, as your luggage is very likely to be delayed or lost. A spokesperson for Alaska Airlines told the Seattle Times that staff was manually sorting over 7000 checks bags at Sea-Tac because a majority of checked bags did not make it onto their flight during the Cyberattack.

Download Your Airline's App: Although the departure and arrival screens were working in the main terminal at SeaTac, the screens were completely black in the terminal I flew out of.

The televisions over the gates did not show what flight was departing from that gate and there was no departure board to check flight status or gate. I had to check my airline's app to find out what gate I was flying out of.

Listen for Information: My departure gate changed about 30 minutes before my flight boarded and there was only one hard-to hear announcement about the change. Without screens displaying information, this would have been really easy to miss, and flyers who didn't hear it may have missed their flight waiting at the wrong gate.

The gate change was never reflected in the airline's app – the only reason I realized my gate had changed was because the airline crew at my gate all got up and left for another gate. Pay attention to all announcements and be sure to confirm with airline staff that you are at the correct gate.

Don't Swap Seats Once Onboard: My flight had to be boarded manually – instead of scanning our boarding passes, the gate agent visually inspected each one before radioing the flight crew which seat number was boarding. After everyone was on the plane, the flight attendants came down the aisle to verify that the correct passengers were in each seat – anyone who swapped seats ended up delaying the process even further.