

# Flyer beware: Don't fall for this airline customer service scam

(Courtesy of Tarah Chieffi, The Points Guy)



Travelers recently uncovered an increasingly common and elaborate airline customer service scam. Here's what you need to know to keep your information safe.

There are some things we do every day without giving them a second thought, whether that's brushing our teeth, checking social media or looking up a phone number online when we need to get a hold of a customer service associate. Each of these tasks seems fairly innocent (and, in one case, good for your oral hygiene). However, an increasingly common scam is adding an element of danger to the everyday practice of reaching out to a company's customer service team when you need assistance.

This week, the scam came to light via a [series of tweets](#) from a [Delta Air Lines](#) passenger named Shmuli Evers. Evers found himself in the unfortunate yet all-too-common situation of having his flight from John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) canceled. After calling a Delta customer service phone number he had found on Google to rebook his flight, Evers began to suspect something was not quite right.

The person on the other end of the line attempted to obtain Evers' credit card information to book him on a new flight later that evening. By this point, the red flags were piling up, and Evers had the wherewithal to hang up the phone before handing over his payment information to the scammers. Upon

further investigation, Evers found that the Google listings for many major airlines were displaying fraudulent numbers.

Here's what you need to know to keep your information safe from similar scams and the best methods for contacting airlines when you need assistance.

### How scammers are deceiving travelers

Unbeknownst to him, the number Evers had Googled was not an actual Delta customer service number. The phone number he found had been deceitfully submitted to Google as a valid number.

The scammers were able to do this via a local business listing for Delta customer service at JFK because Google allows members of the public to suggest edits to a company's contact information. This is done with the intention of providing people with the most relevant and up-to-date information, but some dishonest people try to use this feature to their advantage.

"We do not tolerate this misleading activity, and are constantly monitoring and evolving our platforms to combat fraud and create a safe environment for users and businesses," a Google spokesperson told TPG. "Our teams have already begun reverting the inaccuracies, suspending the malicious accounts involved, and applying additional protections to prevent further abuse."

Google does use a combination of human operators and technology to monitor and amend any incorrect or fraudulent information. In 2022 alone, Google stopped [20 million attempts to create fake business profiles](#) and has even gone as far as [prosecuting scammers](#).

However, when the scammers are successful, an unsuspecting customer searches online for a company's contact information, and the call is answered by someone posing as a customer service agent. Without realizing it, you could easily give up your personal information, flight details and payment information to these bad actors. This would give them the ability to make fraudulent purchases with your credit card or overcharge you for flights and other services, such as rebooking.

Delta is well aware of Evers' situation and is working to curtail this ongoing problem.

"Whenever we become aware of an alleged scam targeting our customers, including in this situation, we immediately conduct an investigation. Using the facts gained from an investigation, when able, we can then address each unique situation as appropriate with the necessary legal means at our disposal," a Delta spokesperson told TPG in a statement.

American Airlines, who was also shown to have a fraudulent number in their Google listing, shared the following statement with TPG. "We're aware of an incorrect phone number for American Airlines being displayed on certain local business listings on Google. Customer service is paramount at American. We will not tolerate scammers taking advantage of our customers and will pursue action against any who attempt to do so. We are conducting a thorough review and are actively working with Google to correct the issue. Customers who need assistance with a current or future reservation can make changes, add special service requests and redeem trip and flight credits by finding their reservation at aa.com or through the mobile app. In addition, customers can chat with us through the mobile app."

## How to keep your information safe

Sadly, Evers' situation is not unique. The [Better Business Bureau's Scam Tracker](#) website has received more than 1,000 reports of airline-related scams over the past seven years. Last year, it published an article with [tips for spotting and avoiding airline scams](#). There are ways to avoid being among the growing list of travelers targeted by these scammers.

In Evers' case, the call he made was disconnected shortly after he reached who he thought was a Delta customer service agent. They called him back from a number with a French country code, which was the first thing that piqued Evers' intuition. The agent then texted Evers details for his new flight from yet another phone number before asking him to call them with his payment information to confirm the new flight, quoting a price that was "five times the price of the original ticket cost," according to Evers.

Evers listened to his gut and saved himself from any [fraudulent charges](#). You can stop scammers before they start by only using official communication channels to contact your airline.

## The best way to contact airlines

If you need to book a flight, have questions about your flight or need to make any changes, be sure you are contacting your airline through known channels. Every major airline has a contact page, help center or something similar on its website.

If you have an [airline credit card](#), you should be able to call the customer service number on the back of your credit card. Or, if you have [elite status](#) with an airline, you may have access to a dedicated customer service number or an airport lounge with live customer service agents (and shorter lines).

Many airlines also offer live chat, texting or Twitter direct messaging service for convenient customer service options if you don't have time to wait on a phone call. Our full guide on [quickly reaching an airline customer service agent](#) outlines the best way to contact each major airline; it also offers tips for getting to a live person when the automated system just won't cut it.

## Bottom line

We know it can be frustrating to stand in a long line at the customer service counter or wait on a lengthy hold with an airline, but both are better than being swindled out of hundreds or even thousands of dollars. In the case of this particular scam, there were multiple red flags that gave Evers pause. Listening to those red flags is how he successfully kept his information safe. If something feels suspicious, trust that little voice inside your head and do not give out any of your personal information. Instead, do your due diligence to ensure you're working directly with your airline when you need assistance.