

# AT&T and Verizon delay 5G rollout near some airports

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*Waiter hand holding an empty digital tablet with smart city and 5G network wireless systems and internet of things .*

AT&T and Verizon said Jan. 18 they would temporarily delay deployment of 5G service at towers near some U.S. airports after airlines warned the rollout would cause flight cancellations.

The company's statement came just hours after the Biden administration said it was in talks with telecom companies, government agencies and airlines about the dispute.

The 5G C-Band service sits next to frequencies used by key instruments on modern aircraft and the FAA had warned it could interfere with those systems, such as radio altimeters.

AT&T and Verizon are scheduled to begin the 5G rollout on Wednesday.

"At our sole discretion we have voluntarily agreed to temporarily defer turning on a limited number of towers around certain airport runways as we continue to work with the aviation industry and the FAA to provide further information about our 5G deployment, since they have not utilized the two years they've had to responsibly plan for this deployment," AT&T said in a statement.

The company said it was "frustrated by the FAA's inability to do what nearly 40 countries have done, which is to safely deploy 5G technology without disrupting aviation services, and we urge it do so in a timely manner. We are launching our advanced 5G services everywhere else as planned with the temporary exception of this limited number of towers."

Verizon also said it would "voluntarily" limit the 5G network near airports. "The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and our nation's airlines have not been able to fully resolve navigating 5G around airports, despite it being safe and fully operational in more than 40 other countries," it said.

AT&T and Verizon didn't say how many airports were affected and how long the delays would last.

Still, some international airlines, including Emirates and Japan Airlines, said they would cancel some U.S. flights because of potential interference. Boeing notified Japan Airlines that 5G signals for U.S. mobile phones "may interfere with the radio wave altimeter installed on the Boeing 777." That notification was sent before the telecom companies agreed to the new limitations.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg released a statement saying he recognized the economic

importance of transitioning to 5G, “and we appreciate the wireless companies working with us to protect the flying public and the country’s supply chain.” He said U.S. airspace “leads the world in safety because of our high standards for aviation, and we will maintain this commitment as wireless companies deploy 5G.”

The agreement to postpone the debut near airports will reduce delays but the Transportation Department still expects some flight disruptions.

Aviation executives repeatedly urged the Biden administration to step in, writing the White House and heads of the FAA, FCC and Transportation Department on Monday, warning of “economic calamity” if the rollout is not limited near airports. They said modern aircraft use radio altimeters for a variety of safety systems and that those planes “will be deemed unusable” and could be grounded.

“In addition to the chaos caused domestically, this lack of usable widebody aircraft could potentially strand tens of thousands of Americans overseas,” said the letter, which was signed by CEOs of Delta, United, Southwest, American and the heads of the aviation arms of UPS and FedEx.

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