UNITED EXPRESS FLIGHT WAS DELAYED BY PILOTS' "DISAGREEMENT"

News / Airlines

A weekend flight on United Express was delayed for five hours in Lubbock, Texas, after the pilots got into a "disagreement" and were unavailable to fly the plane, according to the airline.

A spokesman for ExpressJet, the regional carrier that operated the plane, said Monday reports indicated that police were called. Airport police did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment.

Flight 4453 to Houston was "delayed due to crew availability," said the ExpressJet spokesman, Jarek Beem. "There was a disagreement among crew members. There was no fight ... there was no physical altercation thankfully."

Beem said he didn't have more details about the nature of the dispute, and he declined to identify the pilots. The one-hour flight departed Saturday evening after a new crew was flown in from Houston, he said.

The ExpressJet spokesman said he was not sure whether the first crew faced disciplinary action, adding that the airline was still investigating the incident, which was first reported by travel blogger Gary Leff.

The same pilots were supposed to fly from Houston to Lubbock's Preston Smith International Airport, then make a return trip to Houston after a half-hour stop. But the first flight ran nearly an hour late, according to tracking service FlightAware.com. Beem said there was a mechanical issue with the Embraer twin-engine jet before it left Houston.

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Regional carriers like ExpressJet employ their own pilots to operate flights under contract to the big airlines. Atlanta-based ExpressJet operates about 1,500 daily flights as United Express, American Eagle and Delta Connection.

A United Airlines spokeswoman said the carrier joined ExpressJet in apologizing to inconvenienced passengers but referred all questions to ExpressJet.

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