

# A village pulls together to care for customers and get a Dreamliner flying again

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It all began on the morning of Oct. 12, 2016, when American Airlines flight 288 departed Shanghai for Chicago (ORD). Once in the air, the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner encountered a unexpected mechanical issue and Check Airman and Capt. Mike Forte and Capt. Marty Reedy began guiding the plane toward an unexpected landing in the remote town of Cold Bay, Alaska.

From top: Codeshare partner Alaskan Airways transported customers from Cold Bay to Anchorage. Team work by (from left) Robert Brooks and Gretchen Hawkins from GE; SEA-based Aircraft Maintenance technician (AMT) John Trivette; Crew Chief Kevin Rosado; and AMT John Vertido helped get customers off to their destination and a Dreamliner back in the sky. Capt. Mike Forte, Capt. Marty Reedy and First Officer Jay Englert fueled the plane. Capt. Forte directs passengers on where to find food, shelter and rebooking arrangements. Customers complimented (from left) Capt. Forte, First Officer Englert, First Officer Rich Carstens and Capt. Reedy, on their training, expertise and professionalism in handling flight 288. Crew members gather food and water to provide to displaced passengers while they wait.

Once safely on the ground, each workgroup had an immediate task ensuring customers would be comfortable, fed, sheltered and rebooked. Flight attendants offered a third meal service on the ground, while American's Integrated Operations Center coordinated with the Corporate Security department to help customers off the plane.

Crews knew nothing would be easy working from a former World War II base in a town where residents are measured in dozens. In fact, American's 100 customers and 14 ORD-based crewmembers more than doubled Cold Bay's population. In heavy rain and darkness, supplies were limited and connectivity was almost nonexistent.

The U.S. Coast Guard opened its heated hangar, and, despite having minimal equipment, the pilots helped unload luggage along with an American Customer Care manager traveling on his personal time. Even the Cold Bay Airport Volunteer Fire Department got in on the act, graciously providing a ladder used when personnel needed to evaluate the aircraft.

That evening, American coordinated with its codeshare partner Alaska Airlines to fly a spare B737 to Cold Bay. That aircraft brought customers to Anchorage, where they had a sit-down dinner and a place to sleep thanks to the hard work of so many of American's behind-the-scenes teams.

Three of the four pilots stayed with the B787 in Cold Bay to fly it home. Tech Ops team members who had flown in from Seattle worked through the night, and despite minimal sleep and food, still found time to interact with some curious locals. A chef named Gunny, airport manager Hap (short for Happy), local pilot Chris and fueler Mike from Frosty Fuels were among those who made sure American team members were cared for in tough circumstances.

On the afternoon of Oct. 13, customers departed Anchorage on an American flight to ORD. When they arrived, they were greeted by more than a dozen Customer Service agents and offered food, including Chicago's own Garrett Popcorn, to show thanks for their patience. Misconnecting customers were provided hotels.

You might say it took a village to get our colleagues, customers and aircraft back where they needed to be. In the end, everyone pulled together to get customers to their destinations and the plane back in service in just 48 hours.