

Airport Closure Q&A

The St Helena Government (SHG) acknowledges the significant disruption and concern caused by the current suspension of commercial air services. We are committed to providing the community with a comprehensive update on our progress toward restoring full operations. To address specific questions raised by the public, we have prepared the following Q&A document based on the most current information available.

Question	Answer
What issues do the fire trucks (tenders) have?	The airport has two primary 6x6 Airport Fire Fighting vehicles and a secondary 4x4. All three vehicles have developed unserviceable water pumps due to a common component failure within the pump gearboxes.
When was the problem identified?	<p>The fault was first identified in December 2025 during the scheduled annual service of one primary fire tender. The vehicle was declared unserviceable and taken offline. An immediate order was placed for spares and replacement pumps. This did not affect air operations, and we remained at Category 6 approval.</p> <p>To mitigate risk, we introduced inspection of the second primary truck every second week, to monitor for similar issues.</p> <p>Despite these precautions, in February the second truck developed a more severe manifestation of the same fault following an oil check. This left the Airport unable to maintain compliance with the Category 6 requirement.</p>
Why wasn't the issue identified earlier? Why didn't regular maintenance pick this up early enough?	The pump gearbox is serviced on an annual basis, and it was during this scheduled work that the initial fault was discovered. The manufacturer's maintenance requirement is for annual servicing.
Why can't the airport operate without fire trucks?	The Airport operates under Air Safety Support International (ASSI), which issues the Overseas Territories Aviation Requirements (OTARs) in alignment with Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards. These regulations define both the level of fire-fighting capability an airport must maintain, and the maximum aircraft size permitted to operate there. At present, the Airport is only able to operate at Category 4.
One fire truck having a fault is understandable but all three at	Our priority is restoring air operations to Category 6. We will then investigate the circumstances leading up

the same time – how was this allowed to happen?	to this situation, establishing the facts objectively and seeking to identify any root causes.
What is the plan to get the fire truck parts to the island?	The parts have been sourced and are currently en route to the island. We expect to receive them later this week.
How long will the disruption to service be?	We do not expect any scheduled flights to operate before 21 February at the earliest, however, we will provide regular updates.
What about medical evacuations?	The current Category 4 approval means that medevac flights can operate normally.
What impact will this have on medication and other essentials being airfreighted?	At present our stock levels of medication are not at risk, we are keeping this under close review. Category 4 approval means we do have a viable air route for emergencies.
What support is being offered to passengers waiting to travel inbound and outbound during the disruption and who is paying for this?	<p>For residents inbound, SHG has arranged with Solomons to assist with accommodation and subsistence during the period of the delay. This will only apply to residents coming home.</p> <p>Until further notice, people are urged not to travel to South Africa for onward travel to St Helena unless they are returning home.</p> <p>For outbound residents, people are encouraged to contact their travel provider.</p> <p>For outbound visitors, we are providing tailored assistance whilst on island. Visitors should contact Solomons in the first instance or the General Hospital with any health concerns.</p>
What options are being considered to resolve the issue and get the airport back in operation?	We are pursuing a range of options to return the airport to normal operations as quickly as possible. Spare parts are now en route to the island, and we are looking to source alternate fire appliances with the potential support of the United Kingdom Government (UKG). We are exploring all viable options in parallel to ensure the quickest short-term and best long-term solutions.
What agencies/people are involved?	In St Helena's emergency framework, Gold Command acts as the strategic leadership responsible for setting objectives during a major incident. It is led by the

	<p>Chief Secretary. This group ensures the response has the necessary resources and political alignment. Supporting this structure is the St Helena Resilience Forum (SHRF), a multi-agency body that includes emergency services, government portfolios, and utility providers. This includes SHG officials, St Helena Airport Ltd, Solomon & Company Shipping & Travel. All are actively engaged and collaborating to bring the situation to resolution.</p>
Will new and existing flight bookings be suspended until the problem is resolved and the airport returns to Category 6??	<p>Airlink have currently suspended new bookings to St Helena to avoid confusion. This should not be taken as an indication of how long the disruption will last and flights will only be cancelled on a flight-by-flight basis, as necessary.</p> <p>As of today, 10 February 2026, only flights for 7, 10, 14 and 15 February 2026 have been cancelled.</p>
Local businesses will lose money from expected visitors; can they seek compensation for loss in earning and possibly reputational damage?	<p>We are currently reviewing what assistance we can provide in these circumstances. SHG will reach out to affected businesses imminently. Those with appropriate business insurance should consult their providers.</p>
What does this mean for our tourism sector?	<p>We are working with all local businesses to understand the financial impact on them and to encourage positive messaging to their overseas clients.</p> <p>The impact of negative travel news is usually short-term, with confidence typically returning within around three months once issues are resolved.</p> <p>Travel agents operate on longer planning cycles and can be affected more quickly, which is why St Helena Tourism is leading proactive engagement to maintain confidence and strong working relationships.</p>
What will the airport staff be doing while the airport is non-operational?	<p>Airport staff will continue carrying out their responsibilities, including readiness for medical evacuation and charter flights, in line with Category 4 status. In addition, they will maintain oversight and servicing of airport equipment to ensure operational readiness.</p>
Will my flight be refunded?	<p>This is between the airline, the customer, and the insurer and will depend on whether you travel at a future date.</p>
Why is SHG taking the lead on this? Isn't this an operational matter for the Airport?	<p>. In keeping with the island's emergency planning processes and procedures, SHG has assumed the lead role to coordinate the overall response. The Airport continues to focus on the operational work</p>

	needed to restore services safely, while SHG provides whole-of-government oversight and coordination.
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