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Many of you have already heard that in its contract of carriage, [Southwest has now decided that mechanical issues are outside the airline's control](#). How do I know? Because I've received more email from readers on this issue than any other, I believe. It's amazing how this has grabbed people's attention. The reality of this, however, is not as dire as many are suggesting. Don't get me wrong. I don't like this move, but due to Southwest's policies, this doesn't change much.

Who cares if Southwest considers a mechanical problem under its control or not, right? You should, actually. Airlines make clear distinctions on how much they'll help stranded customers depending upon whether it was due to circumstances within the airline's control or not. Here's a handy chart explaining what's within airline control and what isn't, traditionally.

Within Airline Control