

DOT 162-11

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Contact: Bill Mosley

Tel: (202) 366-4570

Airlines Report Seven Tarmac Delays Longer than Three Hours On Domestic Flights, 11 Longer Than Four Hours on International Flights in October

Airlines reported a total of seven tarmac delays of more than three hours on domestic flights and 11 tarmac delays of more than four hours on international flights in October, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Air Travel Consumer Report.

The larger U.S. airlines have been required to report long tarmac delays on their domestic flights since October 2008. Under a new rule that took effect Aug. 23, 2011, all U.S. and foreign airlines operating at least one aircraft with 30 or more passenger seats must report lengthy tarmac delays at U.S. airports.

Also beginning Aug. 23, carriers operating international flights may not allow tarmac delays at U.S. airports to last longer than four hours. This is in addition to the three-hour limit on domestic tarmac delays, which went into effect in April 2010.

Exceptions to the time limits for both domestic and international flights are allowed only for safety, security or air traffic control-related reasons.

All of the domestic tarmac delays longer than three hours and international tarmac delays longer than four hours took place October 29 and involved flights bound for either New York JFK or Newark airports. Nearly all of the tarmac delays took place at airports to which these flights were diverted. All of the reported tarmac delays are under investigation by the Department.

The monthly report also includes data on on-time performance, chronically delayed flights, flight cancellations, and the causes of flight delays filed with the Department by the reporting carriers. In addition, the report contains information on reports of mishandled baggage filed by consumers with the carriers and consumer service, disability and discrimination complaints received by DOT's Aviation Consumer Protection Division. This report also includes reports of incidents involving pets traveling by air, as required to be filed by U.S. carriers.

On-Time Performance

Information filed with BTS shows that the 16 carriers reporting on-time performance recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 85.5 percent in October, up slightly from both the 83.8 percent on-time rate of October 2010 and September 2011's 83.9 percent rate.

Cancellations

During October, the carriers canceled 0.77 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, down from October 2010's 0.97 percent cancellation rate, but equal to September 2011's 0.82 percent.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of October, there was one flight that was chronically delayed – more than 30 minutes late more than 50 percent of the time – for three consecutive months. There was an additional flight that was chronically delayed flights for two consecutive months. No flights were chronically delayed for four consecutive months. A list of flights that were chronically delayed for a single month is available from BTS (www.bts.gov).

Causes of Flight Delays

In October, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 4.60 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 5.16 percent in September; 4.60 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 5.24 percent in September; 4.03 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 4.29 percent in September; 0.26 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.37 percent in September; and 0.03 percent for security reasons, equal to 0.03 percent in September. Weather is a factor in both the extreme-weather category and the aviation-system category. This includes delays due to the re-routing of flights by DOT's Federal Aviation Administration in consultation with the carriers involved. Weather is also a factor in delays attributed to late-arriving aircraft, although airlines do not report specific causes in that category.

Data collected by BTS also shows the percentage of late flights delayed by weather, including those reported in either the category of extreme weather or included in National Aviation System delays. In October, 31.96 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 3.33 percent from October 2010, when 33.06 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 11.59 percent from September when 36.15 percent of late flights were delayed by weather.

Detailed information on flight delays and their causes is available on the BTS site on the World Wide Web at <http://www.bts.gov>.

Mishandled Baggage

The U.S. carriers reporting flight delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 2.71 reports per 1,000 passengers in October, down from both October 2010's rate of 2.88 and September 2011's rate of 2.81.

Incidents Involving Pets

In October, carriers reported three incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, down from the seven reports filed in October 2010, but equal to September 2011's total of three. October's incidents involved three pet deaths.

Complaints About Airline Service

In October, the Department received 862 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 15.1 percent from the 749 complaints received in October 2010, but down 11.5 percent from the total of 974 filed in September 2011.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in October against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 60 disability-related complaints in October 2011, up from both the 49 disability complaints received in October 2010 and the total of 56 filed in September 2011.

Complaints About Discrimination

In October, the Department received 15 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – up from the total of six filed in October 2010, but equal to the 15 discrimination complaints received in September 2011.

Consumers may file their complaints in writing with the Aviation Consumer Protection Division, U.S. Department of Transportation, C-75, W96-432, 1200 New Jersey Ave. SE, Washington, DC 20590; by voice mail at (202) 366-2220 or by TTY at (202) 366-0511; or on the web at <http://airconsumer.dot.gov>.

Consumers who want on-time performance data for specific flights should call their airline's reservation number or their travel agent. This information is available on the computerized reservation systems used by these agents. The information is also available on the appropriate carrier's website.

The Air Travel Consumer Report can be found on DOT's World Wide Web site at <http://airconsumer.dot.gov>. It is available in "pdf" and Microsoft Word format.

Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT October 2011

KEY ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics by the 16 Reporting Carriers

Overall

85.5 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 94.7 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 91.1 percent
3. AirTran Airways – 89.8 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. JetBlue Airways – 76.7 percent
2. ExpressJet Airlines – 81.5 percent
3. Continental Airlines – 81.6 percent

Domestic Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

1. JetBlue Airways flight 504 from Fort Lauderdale, Fla. to Newark N.J., 10/29/11 – delayed on tarmac 454 minutes
2. JetBlue Airways flight 1013 from Boston to New York JFK, 10/29/11 – delayed on tarmac 420 minutes
3. JetBlue Airways flight 1088 from Charlotte, N.C. to New York JFK, 10/29/11 – delayed on tarmac 314 minutes
4. JetBlue Airways flight 69 from Syracuse, N.Y. to New York JFK, 10/29/11 – delayed on tarmac 263 minutes
5. Continental Airlines flight 106 from Houston Bush to Newark, N.J., 10/29/11 – delayed on tarmac 227 minutes

International Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

1. American Airlines flight 45 from Paris-Charles de Gaulle to New York JFK, 10/29/11 – delayed on tarmac 442 minutes
2. Swiss International Air Lines flight 16 from Zurich, Switzerland to New York JFK, 10/29/11 – delayed on tarmac 340 minutes
3. Pakistan International Airlines flight 711 from Manchester, United Kingdom to New York JFK, 10/29/11 – delayed on tarmac 287 minutes
4. Delta Air Lines flight 141 from Brussels, Belgium to New York JFK, 10/29/11 – delayed on tarmac 285 minutes
5. Continental Airlines flight 97 from Berlin to Newark, N.J., 10/29/11 – delayed on tarmac 282 minutes

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. ExpressJet Airlines – 1.9 percent
2. American Eagle Airlines – 1.3 percent
3. SkyWest Airlines – 1.3 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.2 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.2 percent
3. Delta Air Lines – 0.3 percent

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