

DOT 101-14

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Airline Consumer Complaints Up From Previous Year

WASHINGTON – Airline consumer complaints filed with DOT's Aviation Consumer Protection Division during the first nine months of this year were up 18.2 percent from the first nine months of 2013, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Air Travel Consumer Report released today.

From January to September 2014, the Department received 12,350 consumer complaints, up from the total of 10,444 filed during the first nine months of 2013. In September, the Department received 1,157 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 14.2 percent from the 1,013 complaints received in September 2013, but down 27.8 percent from the total of 1,602 filed in August 2014.

All of the complaints received by DOT are reviewed to determine the extent to which carriers are in compliance with federal aviation consumer protection regulations. The Department also routinely has discussions with individual carriers when it notices spikes or significant variations in complaint types or complaint levels.

The consumer report also includes data on tarmac delays, on-time performance, cancellations, chronically delayed flights, and the causes of flight delays filed with the Department's Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) by the reporting carriers. In addition, the consumer report contains information on airline bumping, mishandled baggage reports filed by consumers with the carriers, and disability and discrimination complaints received by DOT's Aviation Consumer Protection Division. The consumer report also includes reports of incidents involving the loss, death, or injury of pets traveling by air, as required to be filed by U.S. carriers.

Tarmac Delays

In September, airlines reported one tarmac delay of more than three hours on a domestic flight and no tarmac delays of more than four hours on international flights. The reported tarmac delay is under investigation by the Department.

On-Time Performance

The reporting carriers posted an on-time arrival rate of 81.1 percent in September, down from the 83.8 percent on-time rate in September 2013, but up from the 77.7 percent mark in August 2014.

Cancellations

The reporting carriers canceled 1.4 percent of their scheduled domestic flights in September, up from both the 0.9 percent cancellation rate posted in September 2013 and the 1.2 percent rate in August 2014.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of September, 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 were an additional five regularly scheduled flights that were chronically delayed for two consecutive months. There were no chronically delayed flights for four consecutive months or more. A list of flights that were chronically delayed for a single month is [available](#) from [BTS](#).

Causes of Flight Delays

In September, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 5.98 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 6.14 percent in August; 6.07 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 7.97 percent in August; 4.82 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 6.01 percent in August; 0.39 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.68 percent in August; and 0.03 percent for security reasons, equal to 0.03 percent in August.

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 September, 28.19 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down from 35.73 in August and from 32.75 in September 2013.

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

Mishandled Baggage

The U.S. carriers reporting flight delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 2.98 reports per 1,000 passengers in September, up from September 2013's rate of 2.71, but down from August 2014's rate of 3.69. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.71 reports per 1,000 passengers, up from the 3.21 rate recorded during the first nine months of 2013.

Bumping

The report also includes reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for the third quarter and first nine months of this year from U.S. carriers who also report flight delay information. These carriers posted a bumping rate of 0.70 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, equal to the 0.70 rate for the third quarter of 2013. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers had a bumping rate of 1.04 per 10,000 passengers, up from the rate of 0.90 posted during the first nine months of 2013.

Incidents Involving Pets

In September, carriers reported no incidents involving the loss, death, or injury of pets while traveling by air, down from both the two reports filed in September 2013 and the 10 reports filed in August 2014.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in September against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 59 disability-related complaints in September, up from the total of 53 complaints filed in September 2013, but down from the 83 complaints received in August 2014. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 609 disability-related complaints, up 14.3 percent from the total of 533 filed during the first nine months of 2013.

Complaints About Discrimination

In September, the Department received six complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin, or sex – up from the total of five recorded in September 2013, but down from the total of seven recorded in August 2014. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 52 complaints about discrimination, down 10.3 percent from the total of 58 filed during the first nine months of 2013.

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 www.dot.gov/airconsumer.

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 website at <http://www.dot.gov/airconsumer/air-travel-consumer-reports>.

Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT November 2014

KEY SEPTEMBER 2014 ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS

Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics by the 14 Reporting Carriers and
Tarmac Data Filed by All Carriers

Overall

81.1 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 90.8 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 87.2 percent
3. JetBlue Airways – 86.1 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Envoy Air (Formerly American Eagle Airlines) – 73.2 percent
2. ExpressJet Airlines – 74.4 percent
3. Southwest Airlines – 80.1

Domestic Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Three Hours

1. American Airlines flight 1620 from Raleigh-Durham, N.C. to Chicago O’Hare, 9/5/14 – delayed on tarmac 189 minutes in Milwaukee, Wis. due to severe weather at Chicago O’Hare

International Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Four Hours

*There were no international flights in September with tarmac delays exceeding four hours.

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Envoy Air (Formerly American Eagle Airlines) – 5.0 percent
2. ExpressJet Airlines – 3.1 percent
3. SkyWest Airlines – 2.3 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.1 percent
2. Virgin America – 0.2 percent
3. Delta Air Lines – 0.2 percent

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