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News

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March 2015 Complaints About Airline Service Up From Previous Year And February 2015

WASHINGTON – Airline consumer complaints filed with DOT’s Aviation Consumer Protection Division in March 2015 were up 55.1 percent from March 2014 and up 27.2 percent from February 2015, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Air Travel Consumer Report released today.

In March 2015, the Department received 1,733 complaints about airline service from consumers, up from the total of 1,117 filed in March 2014 and the 1,362 received in February 2015. For the first quarter of this year, the Department received 4,580 complaints, up 14.4 percent from the 4,002 filed during the first quarter of 2014. The Department routinely contacts individual carriers when it notices spikes or significant variations in complaint types or complaint levels in regulated areas.

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 statistics on passengers denied confirmed space (oversales/bumping) as filed with BTS by the carriers, mishandled baggage, 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 animals traveling by air, as required to be filed by U.S. carriers.

Tarmac Delays

In March, airlines reported one tarmac delay of more than three hours on a domestic flights and no tarmac delay 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 78.7 percent in March, up from both the 77.6 percent on-time rate in March 2014 and the 72.8 percent mark in February 2015.

Cancellations

The reporting carriers canceled 2.2 percent of their scheduled domestic flights in March, up from the 1.9 percent cancellation rate posted in March 2014, but an improvement over the 4.8 percent rate in February 2015.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of March, there were 10 flights that were chronically delayed – more than 30 minutes late more than 50 percent of the time – for three consecutive months. There were an additional 26 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 March, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported a total of 19.6 percent delay – 5.61 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 6.88 percent in February; 6.86 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 7.76 percent in February; 5.97 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 6.44 percent in February; 0.47 percent by extreme weather, compared to 1.07 percent in February; and 0.03 percent for security reasons, equal to 0.03 percent in February.

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 March, 26.57 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, up from 24.72 percent in March 2014 and down from 34.77 percent in February.

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 3.42 reports per 1,000 passengers in March, down from both March 2014's rate of 3.66 and February 2015's rate of 3.92. For the first quarter of this year, the carriers posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.86 reports per 1,000 passengers, down from the 4.42 rate for the first quarter of 2014.

Bumping

The report also includes airline reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for the first quarter of this year. The 14 U.S. carriers who report on-time performance and mishandled baggage data posted a bumping rate of 0.85 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, down from the 1.37 rate reported for the first quarter of 2014.

Incidents Involving Animals

In March, carriers reported three incidents involving the loss, injury, or death of animals while traveling by air, down from the five reports filed in February 2015. March's incidents involved the deaths of three animals.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in March against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 52 disability-related complaints in March, down from both the 66 complaints received in March 2014 and the 56 complaints received in February 2015. For the first quarter of this year, the Department received 163 disability-related complaints, down from the total of 176 filed during the first quarter of 2014.

Complaints About Discrimination

In March, the Department received three complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin, or sex – down from both the total of four recorded in March 2014 and the five recorded in February 2015. For the first quarter of this year, the Department received 14 discrimination complaints, down from the total of 17 filed during the first quarter of 2014.

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 May 2015

KEY MARCH 2015 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

78.7 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 87.3 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 85.6 percent

3. Delta Air Lines – 84.0 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Frontier Airlines – 65.2 percent
2. Envoy Air – 67.8 percent
3. JetBlue Airways – 71.5 percent

Domestic Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Three Hours

1. Allegiant Air flight 2986 from Punta Gorda, Fla. to Niagara Falls, N.Y., 3/1/15 – delayed on tarmac 184 minutes in Cleveland

International Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Four Hours

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

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Envoy Air – 7.2 percent
2. ExpressJet Airlines – 3.9 percent
3. American Airlines – 3.1 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.2 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 0.3 percent
3. Delta Air Lines – 0.7 percent

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