

DOT 95-13

Wednesday, November 13, 2013

Contact: Bill Mosley

Tel.: (202) 366-4570

Airline Consumer Complaints Down From Previous Year

WASHINGTON – Airline consumer complaints filed with DOT's Aviation Consumer Protection Division during the first nine months of this year were down 14.1 percent from the first nine months of 2012, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Air Travel Consumer Report released today.

From January to September 2013, the Department received 10,439 consumer complaints, down from the total of 12,153 filed during the first nine months of 2012. In September, the Department received 1,008 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 6.8 percent from the 1,081 complaints filed in September 2012 and down 23.5 percent from the 1,318 received in August 2013.

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

Airlines reported two tarmac delays of more than three hours on domestic flights and one tarmac delay of more than four hours on an international flight in September. All reported tarmac delays are investigated by the Department.

The larger U.S. airlines have been required to file complete reports on their long tarmac delays for domestic flights since October 2008. Under a 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, 2011, carriers operating international flights may not allow tarmac delays at U.S. airports to last longer than four hours without giving passengers an opportunity to deplane. There is a separate three-hour limit on tarmac delays involving domestic flights, 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. Severe weather could cause or exacerbate such situations.

On-Time Performance

The reporting carriers posted an on-time arrival rate of 83.8 percent in September, up from both September 2012's 83.3 percent mark and from August 2013's 78.8 percent.

Cancellations

The reporting carriers canceled 0.9 percent of their scheduled domestic flights in September, up from the 0.8 percent cancellation rate posted in September 2012, but down from the 1.0 percent rate posted in August 2013.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of September, there was one regularly scheduled 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 three regularly scheduled flights that were chronically delayed for two consecutive months. There were no chronically delayed flights for four 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 4.41 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 5.66 percent in August; 5.81 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 8.03 percent in August; 4.45 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.79 percent in August; 0.40 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.49 percent in August; and 0.03 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.04 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, 32.75 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, up from 27.66 percent in September 2012 and down from 33.83 percent in August.

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

Mishandled Baggage

The U.S. carriers reporting flight delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 2.70 reports per 1,000 passengers in September, equal to September 2012's rate but down from August 2013's rate of 3.12. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.22 reports per 1,000 passengers, up from the 3.06 rate recorded during the first nine months of 2012.

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 0.72 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, down from the 0.98 rate for the third quarter of 2012. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers had a bumping rate of 0.92 per 10,000 passengers, down from the rate of 0.98 posted during the first nine months of 2012.

Incidents Involving Pets

In September, carriers reported two incidents involving the loss, death, or injury of pets while traveling by air, down from both the five reports filed in September 2012 and the four reports filed in August 2013. September's incidents involved the deaths of two pets.

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 49 disability-related complaints in September, down from both the total of 75 complaints filed in September 2012 and the 87 complaints received in August 2013. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 529 disability-related complaints, down 10.8 percent from the total of 593 filed during the first nine months of 2012.

Complaints About Discrimination

In September, the Department received five complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin, or sex – down from the total of seven recorded in both September 2012 and in August 2013. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 59 complaints about discrimination, down 28.0 percent from the total of 82 filed during the first nine months of 2012.

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 World Wide Web site at <http://www.dot.gov/individuals/air-consumer/air-travel-consumer-reports>. It is available in "pdf" and Microsoft Word format.

Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT November 2013

KEY ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS

**Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics by the 16 Reporting Carriers and
Tarmac Data Filed by All Carriers**

Overall

83.8 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 95.5 percent
2. Delta Air Lines – 90.3 percent
3. Endeavor Air – 88.8 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Southwest Airlines – 76.3 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 76.9 percent
3. American Eagle Airlines – 82.2 percent

Domestic Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Three Hours

1. Spirit Airlines flight 630 from Denver to Chicago, 9/18/13 – delayed on tarmac 194 minutes
2. United Airlines flight 509 from New York LaGuardia to Denver, 9/12/13 – delayed on tarmac 185 minutes

International Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Four Hours

1. United Airlines flight 150 from Nagoya, Japan to Tamuning, Guam, 9/19/13 – delayed on tarmac 263 minutes

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. American Eagle Airlines – 2.6 percent
2. ExpressJet Airlines – 1.6 percent
3. Mesa Airlines – 1.5 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Virgin America – 0.0 percent*
2. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.1 percent
3. Delta Air Lines – 0.1 percent

*Virgin America canceled one flight in September.

-END-