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Rate of Flight Delays Increases in October

Flights operated by the nation's largest airlines arrived on time at a lower rate this past October than in either October of last year or in September 2009, according to the Air Travel Consumer Report released today by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

According to information filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), a part of DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA), the 19 carriers reporting on-time performance recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 77.3 percent in October, a lower rate than both October 2008's 86.0 percent and September 2009's 86.2 percent.

The monthly report also includes data on lengthy tarmac delays, flight cancellations and the causes of flight delays by the reporting carriers, as well as reports of mishandled baggage filed 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.

Cancellations

The consumer report includes BTS data on the number of domestic flights canceled by the reporting carriers. In October, the carriers canceled 1.0 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, higher than the 0.6 percent cancellation rate posted in both October 2008 and September 2009.

Tarmac Delays

In October, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .002 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of three hours or more, up from .001 percent in September. There were no flights with tarmac delay of four hours or more in October.

Causes of Flight Delays

In October, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 8.52 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 4.92 percent in September; 7.20 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 3.88 percent in September; 5.26 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 3.89 percent in September; 0.52 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.37 percent in September; and 0.03 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.02 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 show 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, 41.14 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, up 19.28 percent from October 2008, when 34.49 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and up 18.94 percent from September when 34.59 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 3.48 reports per 1,000 passengers in October, an improvement over October 2008's rate of 3.55 but higher than September 2009's 3.01 rate.

Incidents Involving Pets

In October, carriers reported no incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, down from the total of three reports filed in October 2008 and four in September 2009.

Complaints About Airline Service

In October, the Department received 896 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 42.4 percent from the 629 complaints filed in October 2008 and 48.3 percent more than the total of 604 received in September 2009. The increase in the number of October complaints is attributed primarily to British Airways' erroneous offer of \$40 fares between the United States and India. The carrier has agreed to compensate consumers for cancellation penalties and other expenses incurred due to the mistake.

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 52 disability-related complaints in October, up from both the 41 complaints filed in October 2008 and the 28 complaints received in September 2009.

Complaints About Discrimination

In October, the Department received 10 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – the same total recorded in October 2008 and down from the total of 11 received in September 2009.

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

Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT October 2009

KEY ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics by the 19 Reporting Carriers

Overall

77.3 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 93.4 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 85.8 percent
3. JetBlue Airways – 82.9 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Northwest Airlines – 69.3 percent
2. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 71.6 percent
3. ExpressJet Airlines – 72.6 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. Southwest Airlines flight 3545 from Phoenix to Sacramento, CA – late 95.45 percent of the time
2. Southwest Airlines flight 1366 from Chicago Midway to Minneapolis-St. Paul – late 92.31 percent of the time
3. Southwest Airlines flight 2544 from Phoenix to Los Angeles – late 92.31 percent of the time
4. Comair flight 6352 from Houston to New York JFK – late 90.32 percent of the time
5. Pinnacle Airlines flight 4285 from Sioux Falls, SD to Minneapolis-St. Paul – late 90.00 percent of the time

Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

There were no flights with tarmac delay of four hours or more in October.

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Pinnacle Airlines – 2.3 percent
2. American Eagle Airlines – 2.3 percent
3. Mesa Airlines – 2.1 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.0 percent*
2. Continental Airlines – 0.2 percent
3. JetBlue Airways – 0.3 percent

*Hawaiian Airlines canceled three flights in October

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