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March Airline On-Time Performance Higher Than Last Year, Down from February

The nation's largest airlines had a rate of on-time flights this past March that was higher than the same month last year but down from the mark posted in February 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 78.4 percent in March, better than the 71.6 percent on-time rate of March 2008 but down from February 2009's 82.6 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 information on airline bumping, 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 March, the carriers canceled 2.1 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, a lower rate than the 2.6 percent cancellation rate of March 2008 but higher than the 1.2 percent rate posted in February 2009.

Tarmac Delays

In March, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .0158 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of three hours or more, up from .0088 percent in February. There were 21 flights with tarmac delays of four hours or more in March.

Causes of Flight Delays

In March, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 7.29 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 6.58 percent in February; 6.49 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 4.79 percent in February; 4.84 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 4.17 percent in February; 0.62 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.43 percent in February; and 0.04 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.02 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, 45.48 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, up 9.83 percent from March 2008, when 41.41 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and up 5.01 percent from February when 43.31 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 4.12 reports per 1,000 passengers in March, an improvement over March 2008's rate of 6.66 but higher than February 2009's 3.56 rate. For the first quarter of this year, the carriers posted a mishandled baggage rate of 4.29, down from the 6.81 rate for first quarter of 2008.

Bumping

The report also includes airline reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for the first quarter of this year. The 19 U.S. carriers who report on-time performance and mishandled baggage data posted a bumping rate of 1.31 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, down from the 1.37 rate for the first quarter of 2008 but up from the 1.10 rate posted during the fourth quarter of 2008.

Incidents Involving Pets

In March, carriers reported two incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, down from five incidents in March 2008 and identical to the total of two posted in February 2009. March's incidents involved one death and one injured pet.

Complaints About Airline Service

In March, the Department received 705 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 30.3 percent from the 1,011 complaints filed in March 2008 but 22.4 percent more than the total of 576 complaints received in February 2009. For the first quarter of this year, the Department received 2,164 air service complaints, down 30.7 from the 3,122 complaints received during the first quarter of 2008.

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 37 disability-related complaints in March, down from the total of 44 complaints received in March 2008 but up from the 33 complaints received in February 2009. For the first quarter of this year, the Department received 113 disability-related complaints, down 8.9 percent from the 124 filed during the first quarter of 2008.

Complaints About Discrimination

In March, the Department received six complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – identical to the total of six discrimination complaints filed in March 2008 and up from the total of three received in February 2009. For the first quarter of this year, the Department received 15 discrimination complaints, down from the total of 26 received during the first quarter of 2008.

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 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 March 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

78.4 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 91.5 percent
2. Pinnacle Airlines – 85.1 percent

3. Southwest Airlines – 83.9 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 60.9 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 70.2 percent
3. ExpressJet Airlines – 71.7 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. Comair flight 6382 from Atlanta to Newark, NJ – late 96.30 percent of the time
2. ExpressJet Airlines flight 2090 from Newark, NJ to Bangor, ME – late 93.33 percent of the time
3. Mesa Airlines flight 2610 from Charlotte, NC to Newark, NJ – late 92.59 percent of the time
4. Comair flight 6542 from Kansas City, MO to New York LaGuardia – late 90.00 percent of the time
5. Alaska Airlines flight 152 from Nome, AK to Kotzebue, AK – late 87.10 percent of the time
5. Alaska Airlines flight 69 from Ketchikan, AK to Juneau, AK – late 87.10 percent of the time

Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

1. Delta Air Lines flight 132 from Atlanta to New York JFK, 3/1/09 – delayed on tarmac 348 minutes
2. Delta Air Lines flight 9 from Atlanta to Jacksonville, FL, 3/1/09 – delayed on tarmac 329 minutes
3. Delta Air Lines flight 1028 from Atlanta to Fort Lauderdale, FL, 3/1/09 – delayed on tarmac 327 minutes
4. Delta Air Lines flight 1026 from Atlanta to Newark, NJ, 3/1/09 – delayed on tarmac 324 minutes
5. Delta Air Lines flight 1069 from Atlanta to San Francisco, 3/1/09 – delayed on tarmac 316 minutes

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 5.3 percent
2. Comair – 3.7 percent
3. Alaska Airlines – 3.3 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.1 percent
2. Northwest Airlines – 0.7 percent
3. Southwest Airlines – 1.0 percent

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