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Airline On-Time Performance Improves in May

The nation's largest airlines had a rate of on-time flights this past May that was higher than both the same month last year and the mark posted in April 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 80.5 percent in May, better than both the 79.0 percent on-time rate of May 2008 and April 2009's 79.1 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 May, the carriers canceled 0.9 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, lower than both the 1.0 percent cancellation rate of May 2008 and the 1.5 percent rate posted in April 2009.

Tarmac Delays

In May, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .0064 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of three hours or more, down from .0152 percent in April. There were eight flights with tarmac delays of four hours or more in May.

Causes of Flight Delays

In May, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 7.36 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 7.40 percent in April; 5.84 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 6.19 percent in April; 4.56 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 4.78 percent in April; 0.62 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.69 percent in April; and 0.03 percent for security reasons, the same percentage as April. 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 May, 47.01 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, up 6.72 percent from May 2008, when 44.05 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and up 5.93 percent from April when 44.38 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 3.56 reports per 1,000 passengers in May, an improvement over both May 2008's rate of 4.60 and April 2009's 3.79 rate.

Incidents Involving Pets

In May, carriers reported three incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, down from six incidents in May 2008. Carriers reported zero pet incidents in April 2009. May's incidents involved two deaths and one lost pet.

Complaints About Airline Service

In May, the Department received 656 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 25.9 percent from the 885 complaints filed in May 2008 and 16.0 percent fewer than the total of 781 complaints received in April 2009.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in May against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 39 disability-related complaints in May, the same total that was recorded in May 2008 but down from the total of 46 received in April 2009.

Complaints About Discrimination

In May, the Department received 13 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – the same total that was recorded in May 2008 but down from the total of 14 received in April 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.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

May 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

80.5 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 90.3 percent
2. SkyWest Airlines – 86.8 percent
3. Pinnacle Airlines – 86.8 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Comair – 65.7 percent
2. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 70.8 percent
3. AirTran Airways – 75.6 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. Comair flight 6313 from New York JFK to Minneapolis/St. Paul – late 96.77 percent of the time
2. Comair flight 6652 from Kansas City, MO to New York LaGuardia – late 92.00 percent of the time
3. JetBlue Airways flight 348 from Sarasota/Bradenton, FL to New York JFK – late 90.00 percent of the time
4. JetBlue Airways flight 1080 from Charlotte, NC to New York JFK – late 88.89 percent of the time
5. Atlantic Southeast Airlines flight 5518 from Baton Rouge, LA to Atlanta – late 88.46 percent of the time

Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

1. Mesa Airlines flight 7262 from Washington Dulles to Rochester, NY, 5/29/09 – delayed on tarmac 311 minutes
2. Delta Air Lines flight 141 from New York JFK to Cincinnati, 5/16/09 – delayed on tarmac 294 minutes
3. Mesa Airlines flight 7296 from Washington Dulles to Syracuse, NY, 5/29/09 – delayed on tarmac 271 minutes
4. Mesa Airlines flight 7346 from Washington Dulles to Newark, NJ, 5/29/09 – delayed on tarmac 268 minutes
5. American Eagle Airlines flight 4451 from New York JFK to Cleveland, 05/16/09 – delayed on tarmac 267 minutes

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. American Eagle Airlines – 2.2 percent
2. Comair – 2.1 percent
3. American Airlines – 1.4 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Continental Airlines – 0.2 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 0.2 percent
3. Northwest Airlines – 0.2 percent

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