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Contact: Bill Mosley
Tel.: (202) 366-4570

Airline On-Time Performance Improves in September

Flights operated by the nation's largest airlines arrived on time at a higher rate this past September than in either September of last year or in August 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 86.2 percent in September, higher than both September 2008's 84.9 percent and August 2009's 79.7 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 reports of mishandled baggage filed with the carriers, airline bumping 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 September, the carriers canceled 0.6 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, a lower rate than both the 1.8 percent cancellation rate of September 2008 and the 1.0 percent rate posted in August 2009.

Tarmac Delays (Revised Nov. 24, 2009)

In September, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .0001 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of three hours or more, down from .012 percent in August. There was one flight with tarmac delay of four hours or more in September.

Causes of Flight Delays

In September, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 4.92 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 6.43 percent in August; 3.88 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 6.45 percent in August; 3.89 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.46 percent in July; 0.37 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.69 percent in August; and 0.02 percent for

security reasons, compared to 0.05 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, 34.59 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 6.69 percent from September 2008, when 37.07 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 11.92 percent from August when 39.27 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 3.01 reports per 1,000 passengers in September, an improvement over both September 2008's rate of 3.86 and August 2009's 4.04 rate. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.94 per 1,000 passengers, down from the 5.42 rate posted during January-September 2008.

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 0.98 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, down from the 1.03 rate for the third quarter of 2008. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers had a bumping rate of 1.22 per 10,000 passengers, up from the rate of 1.12 rate posted during the first nine months of 2008.

Incidents Involving Pets

In September, carriers reported four incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, up from both the zero reports filed in September 2008 and three in August 2009. All of September's incidents involved pet deaths.

Complaints About Airline Service

In September, the Department received 604 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 11.6 percent from the 683 complaints filed in September 2008 and 32.0 percent fewer than the total of 888 received in August 2009. For the first nine months of this year the Department received 6,675 complaints, 24.0 percent fewer than the 8,784 complaints filed during January-September 2008.

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 28 disability-related complaints in September, down from both the 40 complaints filed in September 2008 and the total of 47 received in August 2009. For the first nine months of this year the Department received 386 disability-related complaints, up 3.5 percent from the 373 disability complaints filed during January-September 2008.

Complaints About Discrimination

In September, the Department received 11 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – up from the 10 complaints recorded in September 2008 but down from the total of 16 received in August 2009. For the first nine months of this year the Department received 100 discrimination complaints, up 9.9 percent from the total of 91 filed during January-September 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.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 September 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

86.2 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 94.1 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 90.0 percent
3. Southwest Airlines – 89.1 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 72.2 percent
2. Comair – 80.5 percent
3. Delta Air Lines – 82.2 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. SkyWest Airlines flight 4547 from Atlanta to Oklahoma City – late 88.00 percent of the time
2. AirTran Airways flight 455 from New Orleans to Atlanta – late 85.71 percent of the time
3. Atlantic Southeast Airlines flight 5220 from Columbia, SC to Atlanta – late 84.00 percent of the time
4. Atlantic Southeast Airlines flight 5349 from Columbia, SC to Atlanta – late 83.33 percent of the time
5. Atlantic Southeast Airlines flight 5228 from Asheville, NC to Atlanta – late 83.33 percent of the time

Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays (Revised Nov. 24, 2009)

1. Delta Air Lines flight 1015 from Philadelphia to Atlanta, 9/21/09 – delayed on tarmac 275 minutes
(There was only one flight with tarmac delay of four hours or more in September)

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. American Eagle Airlines – 1.2 percent
2. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 1.0 percent
3. Mesa Airlines – 0.9 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. JetBlue Airways – 0.1 percent
2. Continental Airlines – 0.1 percent
3. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.1 percent

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