



**M O V I N G   T H E**  
**AMERICAN**  
**ECONOMY**

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## **News**

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### **Airline On-Time Performance Improves in 2009 as Rate of Mishandled Baggage Decreases**

The nation's largest airlines had an on-time performance rate in 2009 that was their best since 2003, according to the Air Travel Consumer Report released today by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). In addition, the report shows that the carriers' rate of mishandled baggage last year was the lowest recorded since 2004.

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 79.5 percent in 2009, an improvement over 2008's rate of 76.0 and the best annual record since the 82.0 percent on-time rate of 2003. In addition, the carriers recorded a mishandled baggage rate of 3.91 per 1,000 passengers in 2009, an improvement over 2008's 5.26 and the best mark for a calendar year since the rate of 3.84 recorded in 2002.

The monthly report also includes data on lengthy tarmac delays, flight cancellations and the causes of flight delays by the reporting 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.

#### **December On-Time Performance**

The carriers recorded an on-time performance rate of 72.0 percent in December 2009, an improvement over December 2008's 65.3 percent but down from November 2009's 88.6 mark, which was the highest on-time rate since comparable data was first collected in 1995.

#### **Cancellations**

The consumer report includes BTS data on the number of domestic flights canceled by the reporting carriers. In December, the carriers canceled 2.8 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, lower than the 3.3 percent rate recorded in December 2008 but above November 2009's rate of 0.5.

#### **Tarmac Delays**

In December, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .007 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of three hours or more, a lower rate than December 2008's .0343 percent but higher than November 2009's .00079 percent. There was one flight with a tarmac delay of four hours or more in December.

### **Causes of Flight Delays**

In December, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 8.57 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 3.91 percent in November; 8.63 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 3.23 percent in November; 6.62 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 3.39 percent in November; 1.05 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.20 percent in November; and 0.08 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.01 percent in November. 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 December, 45.30 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 0.13 percent from December 2008, when 45.36 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and up 35.51 percent from November when 33.43 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>.

### **December Mishandled Baggage**

U.S. carriers reporting flight delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 5.18 reports per 1,000 passengers in December, down from December 2008's 6.96 rate but higher than November 2009's all-time record low mark of 2.78.

### **Bumping**

The report also includes airline reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for calendar year 2009 and the fourth quarter of last year. The 19 U.S. carriers who report on-time performance and mishandled baggage data posted a bumping rate of 1.19 per 10,000 passengers last year, up from the 1.11 rate posted in 2008. For the fourth quarter of last year, the carriers posted a bumping rate of 1.09 per 10,000 passengers, down from the 1.10 rate for the fourth quarter of 2008.

### **Incidents Involving Pets**

In December, carriers reported three incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, up from the total of one reports filed in December 2008 but down from the total of four recorded in November 2009. December's incidents involved two deaths and one injury.

### **Complaints About Airline Service**

In December, the Department received 692 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 1.4 percent from the 702 complaints received in December 2008 but 25.4 percent more than the total of 552 received in November 2009. For all of last year, the Department received 8,819 complaints, 17.2 percent fewer than the 10,648 complaints received in 2008.

### **Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers**

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 38 disability-related complaints in December, up from both the totals of 34 in December 2008 and 36 in November 2009. For all of last year, the Department received 517 disability complaints, up 8.4 percent from the total of 477 received in 2008.

### **Complaints About Discrimination**

In December, the Department received 12 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – up from both the total of seven recorded in December 2008 and 11 received in November 2009. For all of last year, the Department received 132 discrimination complaints, up 14.8 percent from the total of 115 filed in 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**

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### **AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT December 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**

72.0 percent on-time arrivals

#### **Highest On-Time Arrival Rates**

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 87.0 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 84.0 percent
3. United Airlines – 77.3 percent

#### **Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates**

1. American Eagle Airlines – 64.5 percent
2. Comair – 65.9 percent
3. AirTran Airways – 66.4 percent

#### **Most Frequently Delayed Flights**

1. US Airways flight 807 from Charlotte, NC to Honolulu – late 100 percent of the time
2. AirTran Airways flight 608 from Milwaukee, WI to Baltimore/Washington International Airport – late 93.33 percent of the time
2. ExpressJet Airlines flight 2412 from Minneapolis/St. Paul to Newark, NJ – late 93.33 percent of the time
4. Frontier Airlines flight 752 from Los Angeles to Milwaukee, WI – late 90.32 percent of the time
5. Comair flight 6700 New York JFK to Houston George Bush – late 87.50 percent of the time
5. Hawaiian Airlines flight 5 from Las Vegas to Honolulu – late 87.50 percent of the time

#### **Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays**

1. American Eagle Airlines flight 2808 from Dallas/Ft. Worth to Moline, IL, 12/24/09 – delayed on tarmac 248 minutes  
(There was only one flight with a tarmac delay of four hours or more in December)

#### **Highest Rates of Canceled Flights**

1. Comair – 6.1 percent
2. American Eagle Airlines – 5.9 percent
3. Mesa Airlines – 4.4 percent

#### **Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights**

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.0 percent\*
  2. Frontier Airlines – 0.5 percent
  3. Alaska Airlines – 0.7 percent
- \*Hawaiian canceled two flights in December

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