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Airline On-Time Performance Improves in January

The nation's largest airlines had a higher on-time performance rate this past January than in both January 2009 and December 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 18 carriers reporting on-time performance recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 78.7 percent in January, better than both January 2009's 77.0 percent and December 2009's 72.0 percent. Starting with this report, Northwest Airlines is no longer a ranked carrier, having merged in January with Delta Air Lines.

The monthly report also includes data on lengthy tarmac delays, flight cancellations and the causes of flight delays by the reporting carriers, mishandled baggage, 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 January, the carriers canceled 2.5 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, higher than the 2.3 percent rate recorded in January 2009 but lower than December 2009's rate of 2.8.

Tarmac Delays

In January, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .004 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of three hours or more, a lower rate than both January 2009's .0162 percent and December 2009's .007 percent. There were two flights with tarmac delays of four hours or more in January.

Causes of Flight Delays

In January, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 6.50 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 8.57 percent in December; 6.06 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 8.63 percent in December; 5.28 percent by factors

within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 6.62 percent in December; 0.65 percent by extreme weather, compared to 1.05 percent in December; and 0.08 percent for security reasons, the same percentage as December. 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 January, 39.31 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 9.86 percent from January 2009, when 43.61 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 13.22 percent from December when 45.30 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

U.S. carriers reporting flight delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 4.62 reports per 1,000 passengers in January, down from both January 2009's 5.31 rate and December 2009's 5.18 mark.

Incidents Involving Pets

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

Complaints About Airline Service

In January, the Department received 927 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 4.7 percent from the 885 complaints received in January 2009 and 34.0 percent more than the total of 692 received in December 2009.

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 45 disability-related complaints in January, identical to the total received in January 2009 and up from the total of 38 complaints received in December 2009.

Complaints About Discrimination

In January, the Department received seven complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – up from the total of six recorded in January 2009 but down from the 12 complaints filed in December 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 January 2010

KEY ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics by the 18 Reporting Carriers

Overall

78.7 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 86.7 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 85.8 percent
3. United Airlines – 83.2 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. American Eagle Airlines – 72.8 percent
2. Comair – 73.0 percent
3. Pinnacle Airlines – 73.0 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines flight 9 from Los Angeles to Honolulu – late 92.00 percent of the time
2. Comair flight 6578 from Kansas City to New York JFK – late 87.10 percent of the time
2. SkyWest Airlines flight 5770 from North Bend, OR to San Francisco – late 87.10 percent of the time
4. Hawaiian Airlines flight 7 from Las Vegas to Honolulu – late 83.87 percent of the time
4. SkyWest Airlines flight 5942 from San Francisco to Sacramento, CA – late 83.87 percent of the time
4. SkyWest Airlines flight 5942 from Sacramento, CA to San Francisco – late 83.87 percent of the time

Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

1. Delta Air Lines flight 2244 from Fort Myers, FL to New York LaGuardia, 1/25/10 – delayed on tarmac 253 minutes
2. Delta Air Lines flight 1737 from Charlotte, NC to Atlanta, 1/24/10 – delayed on tarmac 245 minutes

(There were only two flights with tarmac delays of four hours or more in January)

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Pinnacle Airlines – 4.1 percent
2. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 3.9 percent
3. Comair – 3.8 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.1 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.2 percent
3. Continental Airlines – 0.5 percent

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