

DOT 156-10

Tuesday, August 10, 2010

Contact: Bill Mosley

Tel: (202) 366-4570

Long Tarmac Delays in June Down Dramatically from Last Year

The nation's largest airlines reported only three flights in June with tarmac delays of more than three hours compared to 268 flights in June 2009 and with no increase in the rate of canceled flights, 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 only tarmac delays longer than three hours reported in June by the 18 airlines who file on-time performance with DOT involved three United Airlines flights departing Chicago's O'Hare airport on June 18, a day in which the Chicago area experienced a severe thunderstorm. None of the tarmac delays exceeded the three-hour limit by more than five minutes. June was the second full month of data since the new aviation consumer rule went into effect on April 29. In May, the first full month, there were five reported tarmac times of more than three hours, down from 34 in May 2009. A subsequent DOT investigation determined that four of the five May flights were misreported by the airline. Corrected data will be available from BTS when the airline submits revised data.

The carriers canceled 1.5 percent of their scheduled domestic flights in June, equal to the 1.5 percent cancellation rate of June 2009. They posted a 1.2 percent cancellation rate in May 2010.

The new rule prohibits U.S. airlines operating domestic flights from permitting an aircraft to remain on the tarmac for more than three hours without deplaning passengers, with exceptions allowed only for safety or security or if air traffic control advises the pilot in command that returning to the terminal would disrupt airport operations. The Department will investigate tarmac delays that exceed this limit.

The monthly report also includes data on on-time performance, chronically delayed flights, flight cancellations and the causes of flight delays by the reporting carriers. In addition, it has 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.

On-time Performance

The reporting carriers recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 76.4 percent in June, better than the 76.1 percent on-time rate of June 2009 but down from May 2010's 79.9 percent.

Tarmac Delays

In June, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .0840 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of two hours or more, up from .0670 percent in May. There were three flights with tarmac delays of more than three hours in June.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of June, there were 17 chronically delayed flights – those that are more than 30 minutes late more than 50 percent of the time – for two consecutive months. There were no chronically delayed flights for three or four consecutive months or more. A list of flights that were chronically delayed for a single month is [available](#) from BTS (www.bts.gov).

Causes of Flight Delays

In June, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 6.56 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 6.40 percent in May; 8.12 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 6.48 percent in May; 6.29 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.03 percent in May; 0.74 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.60 percent in May; and 0.04 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.03 percent in May. 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 show 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 June, 40.43 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 7.01 percent from June 2009, when 43.48 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and up 3.22 percent from May when 39.17 percent of late flights were delayed by weather.

Detailed information on flight delays and their causes is available on the BTS website at <http://www.bts.gov>.

Mishandled Baggage

The U.S. carriers reporting flight delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.72 reports per 1,000 passengers in June, an improvement over June 2009's rate of 4.26 but up from May 2010's 3.29 rate. For the first six months of the year, the carriers posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.68 per 1,000 passengers, down from the 4.15 rate for the first half of 2009.

Bumping

The report also includes reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for the second quarter and first six months of this year. The 18 U.S. carriers who report denied boarding data posted a bumping rate of 1.06 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, down from the 1.43 rate for the second quarter of 2009. For the first six months of this year, the carriers had a bumping rate of 1.37 per 10,000 passengers, down from the rate of 1.39 rate posted during the first six months of 2009.

Incidents Involving Pets

In June, carriers reported six incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, up from both the five incidents reported in June 2009 and three in May 2010. June's incidents involved six deaths.

Complaints About Airline Service

In June, the Department received 1,419 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 89.7 percent from the 748 complaints filed in June 2009 and up 77.1 percent from the 801 complaints received in May 2010. For the first six months of this year, passengers filed 5,757 complaints, up 32.2 percent from the total of 4,355 received during January-June 2009.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in June against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 60 disability-related complaints in June, higher than both the total of 55 complaints filed in June 2009 and the 41 received in May 2010. For the first six months of the year, the Department received 263 disability-related complaints, up 3.1 percent from the 255 filed during January-June 2009.

Complaints About Discrimination

In June, the Department received 22 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – up from the total of 10 recorded in both June 2009 and in May 2010. For the first six months of this year the Department received 72 discrimination complaints, up from the 55 recorded in January-June 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. In addition, this information is now available for the first time on the reporting airlines' websites.

The Air Travel Consumer Report can be found on DOT's website at <http://airconsumer.dot.gov>. It is available in "pdf" and Microsoft Word format.

Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT June 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

76.4 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 93.6 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 88.9 percent
3. US Airways – 83.4 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Comair – 64.9 percent
2. American Eagle Airlines – 67.9 percent
3. ExpressJet Airlines – 69.7 percent

Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

1. United Airlines flight 688 from Chicago O’Hare to New York LaGuardia, 6/18/10 – delayed on tarmac 185 minutes
2. United Airlines flight 566 from Chicago O’Hare to Atlanta, 6/18/10 – delayed on tarmac 183 minutes
3. United Airlines flight 896 from Chicago O’Hare to Washington Dulles, 6/18/10 – delayed on tarmac 182 minutes

(There were only three flights with tarmac delays of more than three hours in June)

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Comair – 4.0 percent
2. American Eagle Airlines – 3.8 percent
3. Pinnacle Airlines – 2.5 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Continental Airlines – 0.1 percent
2. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.1 percent
3. AirTran Airways – 0.3 percent

-END-