

DOT 168-10

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Long Tarmac Delays in July Down Dramatically from Last Year

The nation's largest airlines reported only three flights in July with tarmac delays of more than three hours, compared to 161 flights in July 2009, with only a slight increase in the rate of canceled flights, according to the Air Travel Consumer Report released today by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

Data filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) showed the only tarmac delays longer than three hours reported in July by the 18 airlines that file on-time performance with DOT involved three American Eagle Airlines flights departing Chicago's O'Hare airport on July 23, a day in which the Chicago area experienced a severe thunderstorm and a number of aircraft were caught on the runway. July was the third full month of data since the new aviation consumer rule went into effect on April 29. There were only four tarmac delays of more than three hours in May and June 2010 combined, compared to 302 during the same two-month period of 2009. BTS is a part of DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA).

The largest carriers canceled 1.4 percent of their scheduled domestic flights in July, slightly up from the 1.2 percent cancellation rate of July 2009. They posted a 1.5 percent cancellation rate in June 2010.

The new tarmac delay 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 76.7 percent in July, down from the 77.6 percent on-time rate of July 2009, but better than June 2010's 76.4 percent.

Tarmac Delays

In July, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .1030 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of two hours or more, up from .0840 percent in June. There were three flights with tarmac delays of more than three hours in July.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of July, there were six flights that were chronically delayed – more than 30 minutes late more than 50 percent of the time – for three consecutive months. There were an additional 53 flights that were chronically delayed for two consecutive months. There were no chronically delayed flights for 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 July, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 6.21 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 6.56 percent in June; 8.13 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 8.12 percent in June; 6.37 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 6.29 percent in June; 0.79 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.74 percent in June; and 0.05 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.04 percent in June. 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 July, 37.61 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 4.59 percent from July 2009, when 39.42 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 6.98 percent from June when 40.43 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>.

Mishandled Baggage

The U.S. carriers reporting flight delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.79 reports per 1,000 passengers in July, an improvement over July 2009's rate of 4.06, but up from June 2010's 3.72 rate.

Incidents Involving Pets

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

Complaints About Airline Service

In July, the Department received 1,094 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 32.3 percent from the 827 complaints filed in July 2009, but down 22.9 percent from the 1,419 complaints received in June 2010.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in July against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 56 disability-related complaints in July, higher than the total of 54 complaints filed in July 2009, but lower than the 60 received in June 2010.

Complaints About Discrimination

In July, the Department received 12 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – down from both the total of 17 recorded in July 2009 and 22 received in June 2010.

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

July 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

76.7 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 94.7 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 88.7 percent
3. United Airlines – 83.0 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. ExpressJet Airlines – 68.6 percent
2. Comair – 69.1 percent
3. Delta Air Lines – 69.9 percent

Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

1. American Eagle flight 4120 from Chicago O'Hare to Knoxville, TN, 7/23/10 – delayed on tarmac 214 minutes
2. American Eagle flight 4241 from Chicago O'Hare to Raleigh/Durham, NC, 7/23/10 – delayed on tarmac 199 minutes
3. American Eagle flight 4196 from Chicago O'Hare to Baltimore/Washington International Airport – delayed on tarmac 198 minutes
(There were only three flights with tarmac delays of more than three hours in July)

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Comair – 3.7 percent
2. Pinnacle Airlines – 2.9 percent
3. Delta Air lines – 2.7 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.0 percent*
2. Continental Airlines – 0.2 percent
3. Alaska Airlines – 0.4 percent

*Hawaiian canceled two flights in July

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