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Airline On-Time Performance Falls, Mishandled Bags and Complaints Rise in July

The on-time performance of the nation's largest airlines declined in July while consumer complaints about airline service and reports of mishandled baggage increased, according to the Air Travel Consumer Report released today by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

The monthly report also includes data on flight cancellations and causes of flight delays, as well as consumer disability and discrimination complaints received by DOT's Aviation Consumer Protection Division. The report also includes reports required to be filed by U.S. carriers of incidents involving pets traveling by air.

Flight Delays

According to information filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), a part of DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration, the 20 carriers reporting on-time performance recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 70.9 percent in July, down from both July 2004's 75.9 percent and June 2005's 75.2 percent.

Cancellations

The consumer report includes BTS data on the number of domestic flights canceled by the reporting carriers. In July, the carriers canceled 2.2 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, up from the 1.6 percent cancellation rate posted in both July 2004 and June 2005.

Causes of Flight Delays

The carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 9.05 percent of their July flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 8.23 percent in June 2005; 8.82 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 7.26 percent in June; 7.11 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 6.28 percent in June; 1.52 percent by extreme weather, compared to 1.11 percent in June; and 0.06 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.05 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 show the percentage of overall flights delayed by weather, including those reported in either the category of extreme weather or included in National Aviation System delays. In July, 8.01 percent of flights were delayed by weather, up 22.29 percent from July 2004, when 6.55 percent of flights were delayed by weather, and up 21 percent from June when 6.62 percent of flights were delayed by weather.

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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 delay and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 7.11 reports per 1,000 passengers in July, higher than both July 2004's 4.99 rate and June 2005's 6.21 mark.

Incidents Involving Pets

In July, carriers reported five incidents involving pets while traveling by air, half as many as June's total of 10. These included three reports of injuries and two pet deaths. Carriers first began reporting pet incidents in May 2005.

Complaints About Airline Service

In July, the Department received 857 complaints from consumers about airline service, up 38.0 percent from the total 621 received in July 2004 and 34.3 percent more than the 638 filed in June 2005.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in July against specific airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 40 disability-related complaints in July, 36.5 percent fewer than the total of 63 filed in July 2004 and 11.1 percent fewer than the 45 received in June 2005.

Complaints About Discrimination

In July, the Department received 16 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – down from July 2004's total of 22 but more than the total of nine received in June 2005.

Consumers may file their complaints in writing with the Aviation Consumer Protection Division, U.S. Department of Transportation, C-75, Room 4107, 400 7th St. SW, Washington, DC 20590; by e-mail at airconsumer@dot.gov; by voice mail at (202) 366-2220 or by TTY at (202) 366-0511.

Consumers who want on-time performance data for specific flights should call their airline ticket offices or their travel agents. 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.

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AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT
July 2005

KEY ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS
Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics
by the 20 Reporting Carriers

Overall

70.9 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 96.4 percent
2. SkyWest Airlines – 84.2 percent
3. Frontier Airlines – 80.6 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. AirTran Airways – 60.0 percent
2. JetBlue Airways – 61.5 percent
3. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 61.7 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. US Airways flight 1619 from Philadelphia to Atlanta – late 100 percent of the time
1. JetBlue Airways flight 35 from New York JFK to West Palm Beach, FL – late 100 percent of the time
3. AirTran Airways flight 439 from Atlanta to Kansas City, MO – late 96.77 percent of the time
3. AirTran Airways flight 1775 from New York LaGuardia to Atlanta – late 96.77 percent of the time
3. American Airlines flight 1204 from Miami to Atlanta – late 96.77 percent of the time
3. AirTran Airways flight 468 from Atlanta to Baltimore-Washington International Airport – late 96.77 percent of the time
3. Delta Air Lines flight 2039 from New York JFK to Fort Lauderdale, FL – late 96.77 percent of the time

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 6.6 percent
2. American Eagle Airlines – 3.9 percent
3. Comair – 3.9 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

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