



DOT 94-08
Monday, July 7, 2008

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Airline On-Time Performance Improves in May

The largest U.S. airlines' rate of on-time flights this past May was higher than in both the same month last year and April 2008, according to the Air Travel Consumer Report released today by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The rates of flight cancellations and mishandled baggage also declined compared to the same periods, according to the report.

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 79.0 percent in May, higher than both May 2007's 77.9 percent and April 2008's 77.7 percent.

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

Cancellations

The consumer report includes BTS data on the number of domestic flights canceled by the reporting carriers. In May, the carriers canceled 1.0 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, lower than both the rates of 1.1 percent in May 2007 and 1.7 percent in April 2008.

Causes of Flight Delays

In May, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 7.73 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 7.70 percent in April; 6.39 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 6.51 percent in April; 5.12 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.63 percent in April; 0.53 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.55 percent in April; and 0.04 percent for security reasons, the same percentage as April. 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 May, 44.05 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, up 12.54 percent from May 2007, when 39.14 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and up 16.26 percent from April when 37.89 percent of late flights were delayed by weather.

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT ADD ONE

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 4.59 reports per 1,000 passengers in May, an improvement over both May 2007's rate of 5.94 and April 2008's 4.99 rate.

Incidents Involving Pets

In May, carriers reported six incidents involving pets while traveling by air, up from three incidents in April. The May incidents involved four deaths and two injuries.

Complaints About Airline Service

In May, the department received 885 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 4.8 percent from the 930 complaints filed in May 2007 and 20.5 percent fewer than the total of 1,113 received in April 2008.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in May against specific airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 39 disability-related complaints in May, up 14.7 percent from the 34 filed in May 2007 and 8.3 percent more than the 36 complaints received in April 2008.

Complaints About Discrimination

In May, the Department received 13 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – up from both the five complaints received in May 2007 and the total of eight received in April 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.ost.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.ost.dot.gov>. It is available in "pdf" and Microsoft Word format.

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AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT
May 2008

KEY ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS
Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics
by the 19 Reporting Carriers

Overall

79.0 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 88.9 percent
2. Pinnacle Airlines – 85.9 percent
3. AirTran Airways – 84.7 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. American Airlines – 67.3 percent
2. United Airlines – 72.4 percent
3. Continental Airlines – 75.4 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. Southwest Airlines flight 2709 from Houston to San Diego – late 100 percent of the time
2. Northwest Airlines flight 851 from Detroit to Anchorage, AK – late 94.12 percent of the time
3. SkyWest Airlines flight 2718 from Muskegon, MI to Flint, MI – late 91.67 percent of the time
4. American Airlines flight 1555 from New York JFK to Miami – late 90.32 percent of the time
4. American Airlines flight 1828 from Seattle to Dallas/Fort Worth – late 90.32 percent of the time

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. American Eagle Airlines – 2.8 percent
2. Mesa Airlines – 2.2 percent
3. American Airlines – 2.1 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Frontier Airlines – 0.1 percent
2. JetBlue Airways – 0.2 percent
3. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 0.2 percent

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