

Flight Delays and Cancellations

Federal Aviation Administration

Report Number: CR-2001-050

Date Issued: April 3, 2001




Memorandum

U.S. Department of
Transportation
Office of the Secretary
of Transportation
Office of Inspector General

Subject: **ACTION**: Flight Delays and Cancellations
CR-2001-050

Date: April 3, 2001

From: Alexis M. Stefani 
Assistant Inspector General for Auditing

Reply to
Attn. of: JA-50:x69970

To: Federal Aviation Administrator

On March 15, 2001, at a hearing of the Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Transportation and Related Agencies, U.S. House of Representatives, we provided testimony on three key issues: (1) the growing severity of delays and cancellations, (2) the factors that will influence future conditions, and (3) the need for both short-term and long-term remedies to address delay problems. As is becoming more and more apparent, the combination of burgeoning demand and limited capacity has resulted in widespread customer dissatisfaction with air travel—a problem the airlines, airports, and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have a critical role in addressing. A copy of our statement is attached.

The solution to the growing problem of delays and resulting consumer concern over air travel will require a combination of short, intermediate, and long term actions. In our statement, we recommended several immediate actions to alleviate some of the problems. Recommendations to FAA—which have been cited in earlier Office of Inspector General reports—focus on establishing: (1) a uniform system for tracking delays, cancellations, and their causes and (2) capacity benchmarks for the Nation's 30 largest airports. For the airlines, we recommended the disclosure of flight delay and cancellation information to consumers at the time of booking. Both FAA and airlines need to continue their efforts to ensure the timely completion of these action items.

In our statement, we highlighted several new areas that require management attention. Accordingly, we recommend that FAA:

1. Work with the airlines to see what scheduling changes can be made, taking into account the capacity benchmarks for the top 30 airports and data related to chronically delayed and canceled flights.

2. Explore accelerating the development and implementation of the Local Area Augmentation System.
3. Complete the remaining 10 of 21 planned action items relating to the seven air traffic control choke points.
4. In coordination with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and airports, establish consistent milestones for completing new runways and ensure these milestones are met and the projects completed on time.

In accordance with DOT Order 8000.1C, we would appreciate receiving your written comments within 20 days. If you concur with our recommendations, please indicate the specific actions taken or planned and the target dates for completion. If you do not concur, please provide your rationale. Furthermore, you may provide alternative courses of action that you believe would resolve the issues.

We appreciate the courtesies and cooperation extended by your staff. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact me at (202) 366-1992 or Mark Dayton, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Competition, Economic, Rail, and Special Programs, at (202) 366-9970.

Attachment

#

The attached testimony, Flight Delays and Cancellations, given on March 15, 2001, can be viewed at the following URL:
<http://www.oig.dot.gov/statements/cc2001118.pdf>