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Airline On-Time Performance Improves in August

Flights operated by the nation's largest airlines arrived on time at a higher rate this past August than in both the previous month and August 2007, 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 19 carriers reporting on-time performance recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 78.4 percent in August, higher than both August 2007's 71.7 percent and July 2008's 75.7 percent.

The monthly report also includes data on flight cancellations and the causes of flight delays, as well as information on 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.

Cancellations

The consumer report includes BTS data on the number of domestic flights canceled by the reporting carriers. In August, the carriers canceled 1.6 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, lower than both the 1.9 percent cancellation rate of August 2007 and the 1.7 percent rate posted in July 2008.

Causes of Flight Delays

In August, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 6.68 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 7.78 percent in July; 6.32 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 7.17 percent in July; 5.82 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 6.30 percent in July; 0.82 percent by extreme weather, compared to 1.01 percent in July; and 0.04 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.05 percent in July. 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 August, 39.36 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, up 2.37 percent from August 2007, when 38.45 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 11.29 percent from July when 44.37 percent of late 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 delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 4.98 reports per 1,000 passengers in August, an improvement over August 2007's rate of 7.58 but higher than July 2008's 4.86 rate.

Incidents Involving Pets

In August, carriers reported four incidents involving pets while traveling by air, down from six incidents in July. The August incidents involved three deaths and one injury.

Complaints About Airline Service

In August, the department received 1,006 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 38.7 percent from the 1,639 complaints filed in August 2007 and 8.0 percent fewer than the total of 1,093 received in July 2008.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in August against specific airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 41 disability-related complaints in August, down 32.8 percent from the 61 filed in August 2007 and 36.9 percent below the 65 complaints received in July 2008.

Complaints About Discrimination

In August, the Department received 17 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – more than both the total of 10 received in August 2007 and the nine complaints filed in July 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
August 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

78.4 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 92.3 percent
2. Pinnacle Airlines – 89.6 percent
3. SkyWest Airlines – 85.7 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. JetBlue Airways – 64.7 percent
2. Comair – 67.4 percent
3. American Airlines – 70.6 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. Comair flight 5610 from Baltimore/Washington International Airport to New York JFK – late 100 percent of the time
1. Comair flight 5109 from Cleveland to New York JFK – late 100 percent of the time
3. Comair flight 5292 from Minneapolis/St. Paul to New York JFK – late 96.77 percent of the time
3. Comair flight 5588 from Norfolk/Virginia Beach/Williamsburg, VA to New York JFK – late 96.77 percent of the time
3. JetBlue Airways flight 74 from Orlando, FL to New York JFK – late 96.77 percent of the time

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Comair – 4.6 percent
2. ExpressJet Airlines – 3.3 percent
3. JetBlue Airways – 3.2 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Frontier Airlines – 0.3 percent
2. Northwest Airlines – 0.5 percent
3. Southwest Airlines – 0.6 percent