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News

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Airlines On-Time Performance in March Better Than February But Slips From Previous Year

The nation's largest airlines recorded a rate of on-time flights this past March that was higher than in February but down from the rate posted in March 2006, 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 20 carriers reporting on-time performance recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 73.3 percent in March, down from March 2006's 76.1 but an improvement over February 2007's 67.3 percent.

The monthly report also includes data on flight cancellations and causes of flight delays, as well as information on reports of mishandled baggage filed with the carriers, airline bumping, 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 March, the carriers canceled 2.6 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, up from the 1.2 percent cancellation rate of March 2006 but down from February 2007's 4.5 percent.

Causes of Flight Delays

The carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 7.62 percent of their March flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 8.83 percent in February 2007; 8.09 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 9.58 percent in February; 7.32 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 8.14 percent in February; 0.80 percent by extreme weather, compared to 1.38 in February; and 0.06 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.07 percent in February. 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.

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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 March, 41.94 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 9.51 percent from March 2006, when 46.35 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and up 0.62 percent from February when 41.68 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 delay and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 7.71 reports per 1,000 passengers in March, higher than March 2006's 5.81 rate but below February 2007's 8.23 mark. For the first three months of this year, the carriers posted a 8.02 mishandled baggage rate, up from the 6.24 rate for January-March 2006.

Bumping

The report also includes airline reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for the first quarter of this year. Of the 20 U.S. carriers who report on-time performance and mishandled baggage data, 18 are also required to report their bumping records to DOT. These 18 carriers posted a bumping rate of 1.45 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, up from the 1.31 rate for the first quarter of 2006.

Incidents Involving Pets

In March, carriers reported four incidents involving pets while traveling by air, compared to two reports in February. The March incidents involved three deaths and one injury.

Complaints About Airline Service

In March, the Department received 1,310 complaints from consumers about airline service, up 85.3 percent from the 707 complaints received in March 2006 and 59.2 percent more than the 823 filed in February 2007. For the first three months of this year consumers filed 2,887 complaints, up 38.4 percent from the total of 2,086 received during January-March 2006.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in March against specific airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 36 disability-related complaints in March, 16.1 percent more than the 31 received in March 2006 and 89.5 percent more than the 19 filed in February 2007. For the first three months of this year the department received 85 disability-related complaints, 15 percent fewer than the 100 filed during January-March 2006.

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Complaints About Discrimination

In March, the Department received eight complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – compared to the totals of 11 complaints filed in March 2006 and six in February 2007. For the first three months of this year, the Department received 23 discrimination complaints, down 11.5 percent from the 26 received during January-March 2006.

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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Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT
March 2007

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

Overall

73.3 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 93.9 percent
2. Aloha Airlines – 93.2 percent
3. Frontier Airlines – 84.8 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. US Airways – 55.5 percent
2. JetBlue Airways – 63.6 percent
3. Northwest Airlines – 66.0 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. US Airways flight 2188 from Washington Reagan National to New York LaGuardia – late 100 percent of the time
2. ExpressJet Airlines flight 2575 from Newark, NJ to Pittsburgh – late 96.15 percent of the time
3. Comair flight 5274 from Boston to New York JFK – late 96.00 percent of the time
4. US Airways flight 836 from Boston to Philadelphia – late 95.00 percent of the time
5. US Airways flight 834 Charlotte, NC to Buffalo, NY – late 92.86 percent of the time

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. American Eagle Airlines – 4.5 percent
2. Pinnacle Airlines – 4.2 percent
3. Comair – 4.0 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.0 percent*
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.3 percent
3. Aloha Airlines – 0.4 percent

*Hawaiian canceled one flight in March.

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