



M O V I N G T H E
AMERICAN
ECONOMY

U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
www.dot.gov/affairs/briefing.htm

News

DOT 36-07
Monday, April 2, 2007

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Flight Delays Rise in February

The larger U.S. airlines posted a lower rate of on-time flights in February than in either the previous month or February of last year, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Air Travel Consumer Report which was issued today.

According to information filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), a part of DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA), the 20 airlines reporting on-time performance with DOT recorded an on-time arrival rate of 67.3 percent in February, down from both February 2006's 75.3 percent and January 2007's 73.1 percent.

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

Causes of Flight Delays

In February, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 8.83 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 8.34 percent in January; 9.58 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 7.88 percent in January; 8.14 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 6.74 percent in January; 1.38 percent by extreme weather, compared to 1.13 percent in January; and 0.07 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.06 percent in December. 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 February, 41.68 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 8.61 percent from February 2006, when 45.61 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 8.49 percent from January when 45.55 percent of flights were delayed by weather.

Flight Cancellations

The consumer report also includes BTS data on the number of domestic flights canceled by the reporting carriers. In February, the carriers canceled 4.5 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, up from both February 2006's 2.1 percent rate and January 2007's 2.5 percent mark.

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Mishandled Baggage

The U.S. carriers reporting flight delays and mishandled baggage recorded a rate of 8.23 reports of mishandled baggage per 1,000 passengers in February, higher than both February 2006's 6.10 rate and January 2007's 8.19 mark.

Incidents Involving Pets

In February, carriers reported two incidents involving pets while traveling by air, down from four incidents in January. The February incidents both involved deaths.

Complaints About Airline Service

In February, the Department received 823 complaints about airline service from consumers up nearly 50 percent from the 550 complaints filed in February 2006 and up nine percent from the total of 752 received in January 2007.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in February against specific airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. In February, the Department received 19 disability-related complaints, down 24 percent from the total of 25 received in February 2006, and 32 percent less than the 28 received in January 2007.

Complaints About Discrimination

In February, the Department received 6 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – one more than the number recorded in February 2006 and four percent less than the total of 10 received in January 2007.

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., S.W., Washington, DC 20590; by e-mail at airconsumer@ost.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. Detailed flight delay information is also available on the BTS site on the World Wide Web at <http://www.bts.gov>.

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
February 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

67.3 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 91.4 percent
2. Aloha Airlines – 91.1 percent
3. Southwest Airlines – 77.3 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Comair – 53.5 percent
2. JetBlue Airways – 57.4 percent
3. Northwest Airlines – 58.8 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. US Airways flight 154 from Philadelphia to San Francisco – late 100 percent of the time
2. JetBlue Airways flight 76 from West Palm Beach, FL to New York JFK – late 96.43 percent of the time
3. US Airways flight 1853 from Buffalo, NY to Philadelphia – late 96.00 percent of the time
4. ExpressJet Airlines flight 3070 from Newark, NJ to Charlotte, NC – late 95.83 percent of the time
4. US Airways flight 1760 from Newark, NJ to Charlotte, NC – late 95.83 percent of the time
4. Mesa Airlines flight 2809 from New York JFK to Charlotte, NC – late 95.83 percent of the time

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Comair – 10.6 percent
2. JetBlue Airways – 9.2 percent
3. Mesa Airlines – 7.4 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.3 percent
2. Aloha Airlines – 0.8 percent
3. Continental Airlines – 0.9 percent

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