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Nation's Airlines Improve On-Time Performance in September

The on-time performance of the nation's largest airlines improved in September compared to August, although the carriers had a lower percentage of on-time flights than in September 2004, 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, the 20 carriers reporting on-time performance recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 82.7 percent in September, an improvement over August 2005's 75.2 percent but below September 2004's 83.9 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. The 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 September, the carriers canceled 2.0 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, fewer than both September 2004's 3.1 percent and August 2005's 2.1 percent.

Causes of Flight Delays

The carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 5.64 percent of their September flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 7.72 percent in August 2005; 4.30 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 7.05 percent in August; 4.67 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 6.42 percent in August; 0.55 percent by extreme weather, compared to 1.15 percent in August; and 0.04 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.07 percent in August. 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 show the percentage of overall flights delayed by weather, including those reported in either the category of extreme weather or included in National Aviation System delays. In September, 3.21 percent of flights were delayed by weather, up 10.31 percent from September 2004, when 2.91 percent of flights were delayed by weather, and down 45.96 percent from August when 5.94 percent of 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 4.49 reports per 1,000 passengers in September, higher than September 2004's 3.81 rate but down from August 2005's 6.31 mark. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers reported a mishandled baggage rate of 6.09 per 1,000 passengers, up from the 4.58 rate for January-September 2004.

Bumping

The report also includes airline reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for the third quarter of 2005. Of the 20 U.S. carriers who report on-time performance and mishandled baggage data, 19 are also required to report their bumping records to DOT. These 19 carriers posted a bumping rate of 0.73 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, up from the 0.62 rate for the third quarter of 2004. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers had a bumping rate of 0.90 per 10,000 passengers, up from the 0.85 rate for January-September 2004.

Incidents Involving Pets

In September, carriers reported one incident involving pets while traveling by air, down from the nine reported in August. The September incident involved the death of a pet. Carriers first began reporting pet incidents in May 2005.

Complaints About Airline Service

In September, the Department received 670 complaints from consumers about airline service, up 13.4 percent from the total of 591 received in September 2004 but 18.5 percent fewer than the 822 filed in August 2005. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 6,908 complaints about airline service, up 24.2 percent from the total of 5,563 received during January-September 2004.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in September against specific airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 28 disability-related complaints in September, down 12.5 percent from the 32 complaints received in September 2004 and fewer than half the 59 complaints received in August 2005. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 402 disability-related complaints, down 3.8 percent from the 418 complaints filed during January-September 2004.

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Complaints About Discrimination

In September, the Department received six complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – down from both the eight complaints received in September 2004 and the 12 received in August 2005. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 100 discrimination complaints, 8.7 percent above the total of 92 filed during January-September 2004.

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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AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT
September 2005

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

Overall

82.7 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 96.3 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 91.8 percent
3. Independence Air – 87.7 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Northwest Airlines – 74.8 percent
2. ExpressJet Airlines – 76.0 percent
3. Alaska Airlines – 78.5 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. Northwest Airlines flight 1477 from Detroit to New Orleans – late 100 percent of the time
2. Southwest Airlines flight 121 from Orlando, FL to Las Vegas – late 94.44 percent of the time
3. Southwest Airlines flight 3404 from Las Vegas to Oakland, CA – late 94.12 percent of the time
4. Southwest Airlines flight 866 from Los Angeles to Las Vegas – late 93.33 percent of the time
5. Continental Airlines flight 1190 from Newark, NJ to Boston – late 90.48 percent of the time

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. ExpressJet Airlines – 6.6 percent
2. Continental Airlines – 4.4 percent
3. Delta Air Lines – 3.9 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.1 percent
2. Independence Air – 0.3 percent
3. JetBlue Airways – 0.6 percent

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