



**M O V I N G T H E  
AMERICAN  
ECONOMY**

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## **News**

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Contact: Bill Mosley  
Tel.: (202) 366-4570

### **Flight Delays, Mishandled Bags, Consumer Complaints Up in 2005 Over Previous Year**

U.S. airlines experienced a higher rate of flight delays, more reports of mishandled baggage and a higher number of complaints about airline service in 2005 than in 2004, 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 77.4 percent in 2005, down from the 78.1 percent mark of 2004. These carriers also recorded a rate of 6.04 reports of mishandled baggage per 1,000 passengers last year, up from 2004's rate of 4.91. The Department received 8,735 complaints from consumers about airline service last year, up 17.2 percent from 2004's total of 7,452 complaints.

The monthly report also includes data on the causes of flight delays, as well as information on flight cancellations and on consumer disability and discrimination complaints received by DOT's Aviation Consumer Protection Division. This report also includes data on airline reports of oversales ("bumping") during the fourth quarter and January-December 2005, as well as reports required to be filed by U.S. carriers of incidents involving pets traveling by air.

#### **December Flight Delays**

According to information filed with BTS, the carriers reporting on-time performance posted a 71.0 percent on-time arrival record in December, down from both December 2004's 71.6 and November 2005's 80.0 percent marks.

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## **AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT ADD ONE**

### **Causes of Flight Delays**

In December, the carriers filing on-time performance reported that 9.46 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 7.48 percent in November; 8.18 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 5.21 percent in November; 8.06 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.41 percent in November; 1.13 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.69 percent in November; and 0.10 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.03 percent in November. 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 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 December, 5.31 percent of flights were delayed by weather, down 1.12 percent from December 2004, when 5.37 percent of flights were delayed by weather, and up 13.70 percent from November when 4.67 percent of flights were delayed by weather.

### **December Flight Cancellations**

The consumer report also includes BTS data on the number of domestic flights canceled by the reporting carriers. In December, the carriers canceled 1.9 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, down from December 2004's 2.8 percent but up from November 2005's 1.0 percent.

### **Mishandled Baggage in December**

The U.S. carriers reporting flight delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 7.73 reports per 1,000 passengers in December, down from December 2004's 9.11 but up from November 2005's 5.00 rate.

### **Bumping**

The report also includes airline reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for 2005 and the fourth quarter of last year. In 2005, the U.S. carriers that report on-time performance, mishandled baggage data and bumping totals had a bumping rate of 0.89 per 10,000 passengers, slightly higher than the 0.86 rate for 2004. For the fourth quarter of 2005, the carriers recorded a bumping rate of 0.83 per 10,000 passengers, down from the 0.90 rate recorded during the fourth quarter of 2004.

## **AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT ADD TWO**

### **Incidents Involving Pets**

In December, carriers reported one incident involving pets while traveling by air, involving the loss of a pet, down from the two incidents reported in November. Carriers first began reporting pet incidents in May 2005.

### **December Complaints About Airline Service**

In December, the department received 640 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 34.6 percent from the 979 complaints filed in December 2004 but up 22.1 percent from the total of 524 received in November 2005.

### **Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers**

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in December and January-December 2005 against specific airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 30 disability-related complaints in December, down 30.2 percent from the total of 43 filed in December 2004 but 7.1 percent more than the total of 28 complaints filed in November 2005. For all of last year, the Department received 507 disability-related complaints, a decrease of 3.4 percent from the total of 525 received in 2004.

### **Complaints About Discrimination**

In December, the Department received 13 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – the same number as in December 2004 but up from the total of four filed in November 2005. For all of last year, the department received 128 discrimination complaints, up 8.5 percent from the 118 received in 2004.

Consumers may file their complaints in writing with the Aviation Consumer Protection Division, U.S. Department of Transportation, C-75, Room 4107, 400 7<sup>th</sup> St., S.W., Washington, DC 20590; by e-mail at [airconsumer@ost.dot.gov](mailto: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  
December 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**

71.0 percent on-time arrivals

**Highest On-Time Arrival Rates**

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 94.2 percent
2. Independence Air – 78.7 percent
3. America West Airlines – 78.5 percent

**Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates**

1. JetBlue Airways – 63.7 percent
2. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 65.4 percent
3. Northwest Airlines – 65.6 percent

**Most Frequently Delayed Flights**

1. Atlantic Southeast Airlines flight 4148 from Dallas-Fort Worth to Salt Lake City – late 100 percent of the time.
1. Southwest Airlines flight 3462 from Houston Hobby Airport to New Orleans – late 100 percent of the time.
3. Southwest Airlines flight 2030 from New Orleans to Houston Hobby Airport – late 95.83 percent of the time
4. American Airlines flight 795 from Miami to St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands – late 94.12 percent of the time
4. American Eagle Airlines flight 4685 from New York JFK to Chicago – late 94.12 percent of the time

**AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT FACT SHEET  
ADD ONE**

4. Northwest Airlines flight 97 from Minneapolis-St. Paul to Honolulu – late 94.12 percent of the time
4. SkyWest Airlines flight 6171 from Sacramento, CA to San Francisco – late 94.12 percent of the time
4. SkyWest Airlines flight 5814 from Birmingham, AL to Chicago – late 94.12 percent of the time

**Highest Rates of Canceled Flights**

1. American Eagle Airlines – 3.9 percent
2. SkyWest Airlines – 3.3 percent
3. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 3.3 percent

**Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights**

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.0 percent\*
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.3 percent
3. JetBlue Airways – 0.3 percent

\*Hawaiian canceled one flight in December.

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