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Airline On-Time Performance Improves in September

Flights operated by the nation's largest airlines arrived on time at a higher rate this past September than in either September of last year or in August 2008, 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 84.9 percent in September, higher than both September 2007's 81.7 percent and August 2008's 78.4 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, airline bumping 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 September, the carriers canceled 1.8 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, a higher rate than both the 1.1 percent cancellation rate of September 2008 and the 1.6 percent rate posted in August 2008.

Causes of Flight Delays

In September, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 5.10 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 6.68 percent in August; 3.62 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 6.32 percent in August; 4.02 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.82 percent in August; 0.40 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.82 percent in August; and 0.02 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.04 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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AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT ADD ONE

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 September, 37.07 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, up 8.52 percent from September 2007, when 34.16 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 5.82 percent from August when 39.36 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 delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.86 reports per 1,000 passengers in September, an improvement over both September 2007's rate of 5.36 and August 2008's 4.98 rate. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers posted a mishandled baggage rate of 5.41 per 1,000 passengers, down from the 7.26 rate posted during January-September 2007.

Bumping

The report also includes reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for the third quarter and first nine months of this year from U.S. carriers who also report flight delay information. These carriers posted a bumping rate of 1.03 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, up from the 0.99 rate for the third quarter of 2007. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers had a bumping rate of 1.11 per 10,000 passengers, down from the rate of 1.22 rate posted during the first nine months of 2007.

Incidents Involving Pets

In September, carriers reported no incidents involving pets while traveling by air, down from four incidents in August.

Complaints About Airline Service

In September, the Department received 684 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 23.8 percent from the 898 complaints filed in September 2007 and 32.0 percent fewer than the total of 1,006 received in August 2008. For the first nine months of this year the Department received 8,786 complaints, 15.7 percent fewer than the 10,420 complaints filed during January-September 2007.

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AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT ADD TWO

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 40 disability-related complaints in September, down 18.4 percent from the 49 filed in September 2007 and 2.4 percent fewer than the 41 complaints received in August 2008. For the first nine months of this year the Department received 372 disability-related complaints, up one-half of one percent from the 370 disability complaints filed during January-September 2007.

Complaints About Discrimination

In September, the Department received 10 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – the same number recorded in September 2007 and down from the total of 17 received in August 2008. For the first nine months of this year the Department received 91 discrimination complaints, up 9.6 percent from the total of 83 filed during January-September 2007.

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
September 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

84.9 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 95.1 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 91.4 percent
3. Pinnacle Airlines – 90.6 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Comair – 77.4 percent
2. Mesa Airlines – 78.1 percent
3. United Airlines – 79.8 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. American Airlines flight 1267 from Miami to San Juan, PR – late 86.67 percent of the time
2. Comair flight 6273 from Cleveland to Atlanta – late 82.76 percent of the time
(There were only two flights in this category in September)

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Continental Airlines – 6.1 percent
2. ExpressJet Airlines – 5.9 percent
3. American Eagle Airlines – 2.5 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.2 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.4 percent
3. Northwest Airlines – 0.5 percent

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