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Airline On-Time Performance Improves In February

The nation's largest airlines had a higher rate of on-time flights this past February than in either February of last year or in January 2009, 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 82.6 percent in February, an improvement over both February 2008's 68.6 percent and January 2009's 77.0 percent.

The monthly report also includes data on lengthy tarmac delays, flight cancellations and the causes of flight delays by the reporting carriers, as well as information on reports of mishandled baggage filed with the carriers 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 February, the carriers canceled 1.2 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, a lower rate than both the 3.6 percent cancellation rate of February 2008 and the 2.3 percent rate posted in January 2009.

Tarmac Delays

In February, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .00009 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of three hours or more, down from .0002 percent in January. There were five flights with tarmac delays of four hours or more in February.

Causes of Flight Delays

In February, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 6.58 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 8.04 percent in January; 4.79 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 6.29 percent in January; 4.17 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.09 percent in January; 0.43 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.96 percent in January; and 0.02 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.04 percent in January. 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 late flights delayed by weather, including those reported in either the category of extreme weather or included in National Aviation System delays. In February, 43.31 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 7.69 percent from February 2008, when 46.92 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 0.69 percent from January when 43.61 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 3.56 reports per 1,000 passengers in February, an improvement over both February 2008's rate of 6.41 and January 2009's 5.20 rate.

Incidents Involving Pets

In February, carriers reported two incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, compared to one incident in February 2008 and no incidents in January 2009. February's incidents involved one death and one lost pet.

Complaints About Airline Service

In February, the Department received 576 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 38.5 percent from the 937 complaints filed in February 2008 and 34.8 percent fewer than the total of 884 complaints received in January 2009.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in February against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 33 disability-related complaints in February, fewer than both the 35 complaints received in February 2008 and the total of 42 received in January 2009.

Complaints About Discrimination

In February, the Department received three complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – down from both the nine complaints received in February 2008 and the total of six filed in January 2009.

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.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.dot.gov>. It is available in "pdf" and Microsoft Word format.

Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT February 2009

KEY ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics by the 19 Reporting Carriers

Overall

82.6 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 91.2 percent
2. Southwest Airlines – 88.3 percent
3. Pinnacle Airlines – 86.8 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Alaska Airlines – 76.3 percent
2. Comair – 76.6 percent
3. Continental Airlines – 77.7 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. Delta Air Lines flight 2008 from Savannah, GA to Atlanta – late 94.12 percent of the time
2. SkyWest Airlines flight 4577 from Atlanta to San Antonio, TX – late 93.33 percent of the time

3. ExpressJet Airlines flight 2424 from Cincinnati to Newark, NJ – late 90.91 percent of the time
4. Delta Air Lines flight 2028 from Fort Lauderdale, FL to Atlanta – late 89.29 percent of the time
5. Comair flight 6309 from Newark, NJ to Cincinnati – late 87.50 percent of the time
5. ExpressJet Airlines flight 2478 from Greensboro/Winston-Salem, NC to Newark, NJ – late 87.50 percent of the time

Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

1. US Airways flight 1165 from Philadelphia to Charlotte, NC, 2/3/09 – delayed on tarmac 259 minutes
2. American Airlines flight 1769 from Philadelphia to Chicago O’Hare, 2/3/2009 – delayed on tarmac 252 minutes
3. Comair flight 6631 from New York JFK to Raleigh/Durham, NC, 2/3/09 – delayed on tarmac 248 minutes
4. Comair flight 6503 from New York JFK to St. Louis, 2/3/09 – delayed on tarmac 244 minutes
5. Northwest Airlines flight 1761 from Philadelphia to Detroit, 2/3/09 – delayed on tarmac 240 minutes

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. American Airlines – 2.2 percent
2. ExpressJet Airlines – 2.2 percent
3. Mesa Airlines – 1.8 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.1 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.2 percent
3. Northwest Airlines – 0.6 percent

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