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Airline On-Time Performance Improves In January

The nation's largest airlines had a higher rate of on-time flights this past January than in either January of last year or in December 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 77.0 percent in January, an improvement over both January 2008's 72.4 percent and December 2008's 65.3 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 January, the carriers canceled 2.3 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, a lower rate than both the 2.9 percent cancellation rate of January 2008 and the 3.3 percent rate posted in December 2008.

Tarmac Delays

In January, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .0002 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of three hours or more, down from .0003 percent in December. There were 16 flights with tarmac delays of four hours or more in January. BTS expects to release data on October, November, December and January tarmac delay times for cancelled and diverted flights and for flights with multiple gate departures on March 23.

Causes of Flight Delays

In January, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 8.04 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 10.57 percent in December; 6.29 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 11.13 percent in December; 5.09 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 7.65 percent in

December; 0.96 percent by extreme weather, compared to 1.53 percent in December; and 0.04 percent for security reasons, the same percentage as 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 January, 43.61 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, up 0.11 percent from January 2008, when 43.56 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 3.86 percent from December when 45.36 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 5.20 reports per 1,000 passengers in January, an improvement over both January 2008's rate of 7.39 and December 2008's 6.96 rate.

Incidents Involving Pets

In January, carriers reported no incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, compared to four in January 2008 and one in December 2008.

Complaints About Airline Service

In January, the Department received 884 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 24.7 percent from the 1,174 complaints filed in January 2008 but 26.3 percent more than the total of 700 received in December 2008.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in January against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 42 disability-related complaints in January, 6.7 percent fewer than the 45 complaints received in January 2008 but 27.3 percent more than the total of 33 filed in December 2008.

Complaints About Discrimination

In January, 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 11 complaints received in January 2008 and the total of seven filed in December 2008.

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 January 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

77.0 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 90.8 percent
2. Southwest Airlines – 83.3 percent
3. ExpressJet Airlines – 79.8 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Comair – 56.7 percent
2. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 68.3 percent
3. Alaska Airlines – 71.5 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. Comair flight 6808 from Cincinnati to Newark, NJ – late 95.65 percent of the time
2. Comair flight 6800 from Minneapolis/St. Paul to New York JFK – late 93.55 percent of the time
3. Comair flight 6801 from New York JFK to Minneapolis/St. Paul – late 93.33 percent of the time

4. Comair flight 6309 from Newark, NJ to Cincinnati – late 91.30 percent of the time
4. Comair flight 6469 from Atlanta to Mobile, AL – late 91.30 percent of the time

Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

1. Comair flight 6331 from Cincinnati to Pittsburgh, 1/28/09 – delayed on tarmac 458 minutes
2. US Airways flight 468 from Columbus, OH to Phoenix, 1/28/2009 – delayed on tarmac 375 minutes
3. Atlantic Southeast Airlines flight 5613 from Cincinnati to Memphis, TN, 1/28/09 – delayed on tarmac 346 minutes
4. Atlantic Southeast Airlines flight 5615 from Akron/Canton, OH to Atlanta, 1/28/09 – delayed on tarmac 299 minutes
5. Comair flight 6367 from Cincinnati to Charleston, SC, 1/28/09 – delayed on tarmac 298 minutes

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Comair – 6.2 percent
2. American Eagle Airlines – 4.1 percent
3. American Airlines – 3.5 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.5 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.5 percent
3. Northwest Airlines – 0.7 percent

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