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News

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Airlines On-Time Performance in March Better Than February But Slips From Previous Year

The nation's largest airlines recorded a rate of on-time flights this past March that was higher than February's rate but down slightly from March 2005, 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 76.1 percent in March, down from March 2005's 76.9 but an improvement over February 2006's 75.3.

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. This 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 March, the carriers canceled 1.2 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, down from both the 1.6 percent cancellation rate of March 2005 and the 2.1 percent rate recorded in February 2006.

Causes of Flight Delays

The carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 7.86 percent of their March flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 8.32 percent in February 2006; 7.42 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 6.92 percent in February; 6.27 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 6.08 percent in February; 0.81 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.92 in February; and 0.08 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.09 percent in February. 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 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 March, 5.16 percent of flights were delayed by weather, up 3.20 percent from March 2005, when 5.00 percent of flights were delayed by weather, and up 7.72 percent from February when 4.79 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 5.81 reports per 1,000 passengers in March, down from both March 2005's 6.41 rate and February 2006's 6.08 mark. For the first three months of this year, the carriers posted a 6.24 mishandled baggage rate, well below the 6.83 rate for January-March 2005.

Bumping

The report also includes airline reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for the first quarter of this year. Of the 19 U.S. carriers who report on-time performance and mishandled baggage data, 18 are also required to report their bumping records to DOT. These 18 carriers posted a bumping rate of 1.31 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, up from the 1.11 rate for the first quarter of 2005.

Incidents Involving Pets

In March, carriers reported two incidents involving pets while traveling by air, compared to one report in February. Both March incidents involved injuries to pets. Carriers first began reporting pet incidents in May 2005.

Complaints About Airline Service

In March, the Department received 709 complaints from consumers about airline service, up 2.5 percent from the 692 complaints received in March 2005 and 29.1 percent more than the 549 filed in February 2006. For the first three months of this year consumers filed 2,086 complaints, down 21.5 percent from the total of 2,657 received during January-March 2005.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in March against specific airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 30 disability-related complaints in March, 30.2 percent fewer than the 43 received in March 2005 but 20 percent more than the 25 filed in February 2006. For the first three months of this year the department received 98 disability-related complaints, 31 percent fewer than the 142 filed during January-March 2005.

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AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT ADD TWO

Complaints About Discrimination

In March, the Department received 11 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – compared to the totals of 13 complaints filed in March 2005 and five in February 2006. For the first three months of this year, the Department received 26 discrimination complaints, down 29.7 percent from the 37 received during January-March 2005.

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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Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT
March 2006

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

Overall

76.1 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 90.9 percent
2. Comair – 84.1 percent
3. US Airways – 82.6 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. United Airlines – 69.3 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 70.0 percent
3. ATA Airlines – 70.3 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. Delta Air Lines flight 1442 from Miami to New York LaGuardia – late 93.55 percent of the time
2. American Airlines flight 1763 from Chicago O’Hare to Orange County, CA – late 92.59 percent of the time
3. United Airlines flight 1567 from Chicago O’Hare to Las Vegas – late 90.32 percent of the time
4. American Airlines flight 1497 from Newark, NJ to Chicago O’Hare – late 88.89 percent of the time
5. Continental Airlines flight 1187 from Newark, NJ to Chicago O’Hare – late 88.89 percent of the time

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. American Eagle Airlines – 3.1 percent
2. SkyWest Airlines – 2.4 percent
3. United Airlines – 2.0 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. JetBlue Airways – 0.0 percent*
2. AirTran Airways – 0.2 percent
3. Frontier Airlines – 0.2 percent

*JetBlue canceled six flights in March.

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