

DOT 15-13

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Airlines Report Lowest Mishandled Baggage Rate in 18 Years in 2012

The nation's largest airlines reported their lowest rate of mishandled baggage for a year during 2012, and set high marks for on-time performance, the fewest long tarmac delays, and a low rate of canceled flights.

According to the Air Travel Consumer Report issued today by the U.S. Department of Transportation, the reporting carriers posted a rate of 3.09 reports of mishandled baggage per 1,000 passengers, an improvement on 2011's rate of 3.35 and their lowest rate of mishandled baggage for a year since this data was first reported in September 1987.

The 15 largest U.S. airlines also posted an 81.85 percent on-time arrival rate during 2012, the third highest annual performance in the 18 years the Department has collected comparable data. The high was 82.14 percent in 2002, followed by 81.96 in 2003. The 1.29 percent cancellation rate for the year also was the second lowest rate for the past 18 years, with the lowest being the 1.24 percent mark set in 2002.

In addition, there were 42 tarmac delays longer than three hours on U.S. domestic flights in 2012, down from 50 delays in 2011, which was the first full year the rule limiting tarmac delays was in effect. This follows the Department's rule, which took effect in April 2010, setting a three-hour limit for aircraft carrying passengers on domestic flights to sit on the tarmac. Exceptions to the time limits are allowed only for safety, security or air traffic control-related reasons.

Between May 2009 and April 2010, the final 12 months before the rule took effect, the carriers reported 693 tarmac delays of more than three hours. Since August 2011, U.S. and foreign airlines operating international flights at U.S. airports have been subject to a four-hour tarmac delay limit.

A statement from U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood is available [here](#).

The monthly Air Travel Consumer Report also includes data on chronically delayed flights and the causes of flight delays filed with the Department's Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) by the reporting carriers. In addition, the report contains information on airline bumping as well as customer 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. Calendar year 2012 data are contained in the report in a number of areas as well as data for December 2012.

On-Time Performance in December

The reporting carriers posted an on-time arrival rate in December of 76.6 percent, down from both December 2011's 84.4 percent mark and November 2012's 85.7 percent.

Tarmac Delays in December

Airlines reported 16 tarmac delays of more than three hours on domestic flights and one tarmac delay of more than four hours on international flights in December. Fourteen of the domestic tarmac delays took place on Dec. 25 at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport where a snow and ice storm affected the area that day. All of the reported tarmac delays are under investigation by the Department.

Cancellations in December

The reporting carriers canceled 1.6 percent of their scheduled domestic flights in December, up from both the 0.8 percent cancellation rate posted in December 2011 and November 2012's cancellation rate of 1.0 percent.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of December, there was one flight that was chronically delayed – more than 30 minutes late more than 50 percent of the time – for two consecutive months. No flights were chronically delayed for three consecutive months or more. A list of flights that were chronically delayed for a single month is available from BTS (www.bts.gov).

Causes of Flight Delays

In December, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 6.19 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 3.68 percent in November; 8.55 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 4.89 percent in November; 6.21 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 4.27 percent in November; 0.59 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.22 percent in November; and 0.05 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.02 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 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 December, 32.81 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 5.17 percent from December 2011, when 34.60 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and up 29.43 percent from November when 25.35 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 in December

The U.S. carriers reporting flight delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 4.15 reports per 1,000 passengers in December, up from both December 2011's rate of 3.22 and November 2012's rate of 2.64.

Bumping

The report also includes airline reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for calendar year 2012 and the fourth quarter of last year. The 15 U.S. carriers who report on-time performance and

mishandled baggage data posted a bumping rate of 0.99 per 10,000 passengers last year, up from the 0.77 rate posted in 2011. For the fourth quarter of last year, the carriers posted a bumping rate of 1.00 per 10,000 passengers, up from the 0.65 rate for the fourth quarter of 2011.

Incidents Involving Pets

In December, carriers reported five incidents involving the loss, death, or injury of pets while traveling by air, equal to the five reports filed in December 2011, but up from November 2012's total of one. December's incidents involved one pet death and four pet injuries. For all of last year, carriers reported 30 pet deaths, 27 pet injuries, and one lost pet. In 2011, carriers reported 35 pet deaths, nine pet injuries, and two lost pets.

Complaints About Airline Service

In December, the Department received 901 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 26.7 percent from the 711 complaints received in December 2011, and down 8.7 percent from the total of 987 filed in November 2012. For all of last year, the Department received 15,335 complaints, 32.8 percent higher than the 11,546 complaints received in 2011.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in December against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 35 disability-related complaints in December 2012, down from both the 59 disability complaints received in December 2011 and the total of 55 filed in November 2012. For all of last year, the Department received 743 disability complaints, up 18.3 percent from the total of 628 received in 2011.

Complaints About Discrimination

In December, 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 the total of seven filed in both December 2011 and in November 2012. For all of last year, the Department received 99 discrimination complaints, down 22.7 percent from the total of 128 filed in 2011.

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 www.dot.gov/airconsumer.

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 information is also available on the appropriate carrier's website.

The Air Travel Consumer Report can be found on DOT's World Wide Web site at www.dot.gov/airconsumer. It is available in "pdf" and Microsoft Word format.

Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT December 2012

KEY ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics by the 15 Reporting Carriers and Tarmac Data Filed by All Carriers

Overall

76.6 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 93.3 percent
2. Delta Air Lines – 85.4 percent
3. Alaska Airlines – 83.3 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Frontier Airlines – 62.7 percent
2. JetBlue Airways – 70.2 percent
3. ExpressJet Airlines – 71.2 percent

Domestic Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Three Hours

1. American Eagle Airlines flight 3361 from Baton Rouge, La. to Dallas-Fort Worth, 12/25/12 – delayed on tarmac 272 minutes
2. American Eagle Airlines flight 2720 from Sioux Falls, S.D. to Dallas-Fort Worth, 12/25/12 – delayed on tarmac 228 minutes
3. American Eagle Airlines flight 3327 from Knoxville, Tenn. to Dallas-Fort Worth, 12/25/12 – delayed on tarmac 218 minutes
4. Southwest Airlines flight 340 from Raleigh-Durham to Baltimore, 12/17/12 – delayed on tarmac 214 minutes
5. American Eagle Airlines flight 3272 from Fort Smith, Ark. to Dallas-Fort Worth, 12/25/12 – delayed on tarmac 212 minutes

International Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Four Hours

1. American Eagle Airlines flight 2701 from Dallas-Fort Worth to Guadalajara, Mexico, 12/25/12 – delayed on tarmac 250 minutes

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. SkyWest Airlines – 3.0 percent
2. American Eagle Airlines – 3.0 percent
3. ExpressJet Airlines – 3.0 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.1 percent
2. Virgin America – 0.2 percent
3. Delta Air Lines – 0.3 percent

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