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News

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Airlines Report Fourteen Tarmac Delays Over Three Hours on Domestic Flights, Two Tarmac Delays Longer Than Four Hours on International Flights in May

WASHINGTON – Airlines reported 14 tarmac delays of more than three hours on domestic flights and two tarmac delays of more than four hours on international flights in May, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Air Travel Consumer Report released today. Ten of the reported tarmac delays involved flights departing from Houston on May 25 during severe weather. All of the reported tarmac delays are under investigation by the Department.

Airlines operating international flights may not allow tarmac delays at U.S. airports to last longer than four hours without giving passengers an opportunity to deplane. There is a separate three-hour limit on tarmac delays involving domestic flights. Exceptions to the time limits for both domestic and international flights are allowed only for safety, security, or air traffic control-related reasons. DOT rules require all U.S. and foreign airlines operating at least one aircraft with 30 or more passenger seats to report lengthy tarmac delays at U.S. airports.

In addition, the nation’s largest airlines posted an on-time arrival rate of 80.5 percent in May, up from the 76.9 percent on-time rate in May 2014, but down from the 81.8 percent mark in April 2015.

The consumer report also includes data on mishandled baggage, cancellations, 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 consumer report contains statistics on aviation service complaints filed with DOT’s Aviation Consumer Protection Division by consumers regarding a range of issues such as flight problems, baggage, reservation and ticketing, refunds, consumer service, disability, and discrimination. The consumer report also includes reports of incidents involving the loss, death, or injury of animals traveling by air, as required to be filed by U.S. carriers.

Cancellations

In May, the reporting carriers canceled 1.1 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, an improvement over the 1.9 percent cancellation rate posted in May 2014, but up from the 0.9 percent rate in April 2015.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of May, there were two flights that were chronically delayed – more than 30 minutes late more than 50 percent of the time – for two consecutive months. There were no chronically delayed flights for three consecutive months or more. A list of flights that were chronically delayed for a single month is [available](#) from [BTS](#).

Causes of Flight Delays

In May, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported total delays of 19.5 percent – 5.34 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 5.36 percent in April; 6.62 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 5.91 percent in April; 5.31 percent by factors within the airline’s control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.09 percent in April; 0.73 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.57 percent in April; and 0.03 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.02 percent in April. In addition, 1.15 percent of flights were canceled and 0.33 percent were diverted.

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 May, 35.21 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, up from 33.49 percent in May 2014 and from 29.93 percent in April 2015.

Detailed information on flight delays and their causes is available on the BTS site at <http://www.bts.gov>.

Mishandled Baggage

The U.S. carriers reporting flight delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.09 reports per 1,000 passengers in May, down from May 2014’s rate of 3.32, but up from April 2015’s rate of 2.93.

Incidents Involving Animals

In May, carriers reported 12 incidents involving the loss, injury, or death of animals while traveling by air, up from the six reports filed in in April 2015. April’s incidents involved the deaths of five animals and seven injured animals.

Complaints About Airline Service

In May, the Department received 1,492 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 16.4 percent from the total of 1,282 filed in May 2014 and up 5.4 percent from the 1,415 received in April 2015.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in May against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 73 disability-related complaints in May, up from both the 65 complaints received in May 2014 and the 59 complaints received in April 2015.

Complaints About Discrimination

In May, the Department received two complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin, or sex – down from both the total of four recorded in May 2014 and the eight recorded in April 2015.

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.transportation.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 website at <http://www.transportation.gov/airconsumer/air-travel-consumer-reports>.

Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT July 2015

KEY MAY 2015 ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics by the 14 Reporting Carriers and Tarmac Data Filed by All Carriers

Overall

80.5 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 90.9 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 88.0 percent
3. Delta Air Lines – 87.2 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Spirit Airlines – 61.2 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 73.1 percent
3. Virgin America – 76.0 percent

Domestic Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Three Hours

1. United Airlines flight 1541 from Houston to Tampa, 5/25/15 – delayed on tarmac 238 minutes
2. ExpressJet Airlines flight 4478 from Houston to Omaha, Neb., 5/25/15 – delayed on tarmac 228 minutes

3. ExpressJet Airlines flight 4275 from Houston to Corpus Christi, Texas, 5/25/15 – delayed on tarmac 225 minutes
4. ExpressJet Airlines flight 4317 from Houston to Milwaukee, Wis., 5/25/15 – delayed on tarmac 214 minutes
5. ExpressJet Airlines flight 4262 from Houston to McAllen, Texas, 5/25/15 – delayed on tarmac 209 minutes

International Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Four Hours

1. British Airways flight 218 from Denver to London Heathrow, 5/9/15 – delayed on tarmac 310 minutes
2. Philippine Airlines flight 127 from New York JFK to Vancouver, Canada, 5/17/15 – delayed on tarmac 270 minutes

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Envoy Air – 3.7 percent
2. Spirit Airlines – 2.2 percent
3. ExpressJet Airlines – 2.1 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

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

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