

DOT 19-14

Tuesday, February 11, 2014

Contact: Caitlin Harvey

Tel.: (202) 366-4570

2013 Airline Consumer Complaints Down From Previous Year

WASHINGTON – Airline consumer complaints filed with the U.S. Department of Transportation’s (DOT) Aviation Consumer Protection Division during 2013 were down 14.1 percent from 2012, according to the DOT’s Air Travel Consumer Report released today.

The Department received 13,168 complaints in 2013, down from the 15,338 complaints filed in 2012. In December, the Department received 1,114 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 23.5 percent from the 902 complaints received in December 2012, and up 47.5 percent from the total of 755 filed in November 2013.

For the month of December, airlines reported 10 tarmac delays of more than three hours on domestic flights and four tarmac delays of more than four hours on international flights. Most of the reported tarmac delays involved flights that arrived at or departed from Chicago O’Hare Airport on Dec. 8 that were delayed due to a snowstorm. All of the reported delays are under investigation by the Department.

The larger U.S. airlines have been required to file complete reports on their long tarmac delays for domestic flights since October 2008. Under a rule that took effect Aug. 23, 2011, all U.S. and foreign airlines operating at least one aircraft with 30 or more passenger seats must report lengthy tarmac delays at U.S. airports.

Also beginning Aug. 23, 2011, carriers 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, which went into effect in April 2010. Exceptions to the time limits for both domestic and international flights are allowed only for safety, security, or air traffic control-related reasons. Severe weather could cause or exacerbate such situations.

The consumer report also includes data on on-time performance, 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 information on passengers denied confirmed space (oversales/bumping) as filed with BTS by the carriers, mishandled baggage reports filed by consumers with the carriers, and airline service complaints received by DOT’s Aviation Consumer Protection Division. The consumer report also includes reports of incidents involving the loss, death, or injury of pets traveling by air, as required to be filed by U.S. carriers.

On-Time Performance

The reporting carriers posted an on-time arrival rate of 68.9 percent in December, down from both December 2012's 76.6 percent mark and November 2013's 83.5 percent.

Cancellations

The reporting carriers canceled 2.9 percent of their scheduled domestic flights in December, up from both the 1.6 percent cancellation rate posted in December 2012 and the 1.0 percent rate posted in November 2013.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of December, there were seven 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 December, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 7.77 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 4.59 percent in November; 11.25 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 5.78 percent in November; 8.03 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 4.63 percent in November; 0.95 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.31 percent in November; and 0.05 percent for security reasons, equal to 0.05 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, 30.49 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down from 32.81 in December 2012 and up from 27.11 percent in November.

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

Mishandled Baggage

The U.S. carriers reporting flight delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 4.55 reports per 1,000 passengers in December, up from both December 2012's rate of 4.15 and November 2013's rate of 2.62. For all of last year, the carriers posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.22 per 1,000 passengers, up from 2012's rate of 3.09.

Bumping

The report also includes airline reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for calendar year 2013 and the fourth quarter of last year. The 16 U.S. carriers who report on-time performance and

mishandled baggage data posted a bumping rate of 0.92 per 10,000 passengers last year, down from the 0.99 rate posted in 2012. For the fourth quarter of last year, the carriers posted a bumping rate of 0.90 per 10,000 passengers, down from the 1.00 rate for the fourth quarter of 2012.

Incidents Involving Pets

In December, carriers reported two incidents involving the loss, death, or injury of pets while traveling by air, down from both the five reports filed in December 2012 and the six reports filed in November 2013. December's incidents involved two lost pets. For all of last year, carriers reported 21 pet deaths, 15 pet injuries, and six lost pets. In 2012, carriers reported 29 pet deaths, 26 pet injuries, and one lost pet.

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 47 disability-related complaints in December, up from the total of 35 complaints filed in December 2012, but down from the 52 complaints received in November 2013. For all of last year, the Department received 679 disability complaints, down 8.4 percent from the total of 741 received in 2012.

Complaints About Discrimination

In December, the Department received nine complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin, or sex – up from both the total of three recorded in December 2012 and the five recorded in November 2013. For all of last year, the Department received 79 discrimination complaints, down 20.2 percent from the total of 99 filed in 2012.

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 is available in PDF format.

Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT February 2014

KEY ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics by the 16 Reporting Carriers and Tarmac Data Filed by All Carriers

Overall

68.9 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 92.4 percent
2. Virgin America – 85.6 percent
3. Alaska Airlines – 85.5 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Southwest Airlines – 57.7 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 60.2 percent
3. American Eagle Airlines – 60.5 percent

Domestic Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Three Hours

1. United Airlines flight 691 from Chicago O’Hare to Houston, 12/8/13 – delayed on tarmac 244 minutes
2. GoJet Airlines flight 3640 from Traverse City, Mich. to Chicago O’Hare, 12/8/13 – delayed on tarmac 239 minutes
3. United Airlines flight 1138 from Chicago O’Hare to Washington Dulles, 12/8/13 – delayed on tarmac 228 minutes
4. United Airlines flight 780 from Washington Reagan to Chicago O’Hare, 12/8/13 – delayed on tarmac 217 minutes
5. Chautauqua Airlines flight 4717 from Cleveland to Chicago O’Hare, 12/8/13 – delayed on tarmac 215 minutes

International Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Four Hours

1. United Airlines flight 987 from Chicago O’Hare to Paris, 12/8/13 – delayed on tarmac 270 minutes
2. British Airways flight 212 from Boston to London, 12/17/13 – delayed on tarmac 259 minutes
3. United Airlines flight 928 from Chicago O’Hare to London, 12/8/13 – delayed on tarmac 256 minutes
4. United Airlines flight 952 from Chicago O’Hare to Munich, 12/8/13 – delayed on tarmac 245 minutes

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. American Eagle Airlines – 9.4 percent
2. American Airlines – 6.5 percent
3. ExpressJet Airlines – 5.4 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.2 percent
2. Delta Air Lines – 0.4 percent
3. Frontier Airlines – 0.5 percent

-END-