

DOT 125-12

Thursday, November 8, 2012

Contact: Bill Mosley

Tel.: (202) 366-4570

Airlines Report No Tarmac Delays Over Three Hours on Domestic Flights or Longer Than Four Hours on International Flights in September

Airlines reported no tarmac delays of more than three hours on domestic flights or more than four hours on international flights in September, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Air Travel Consumer Report released today.

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 new 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, it contains information on airline bumping, mishandled baggage reports filed by consumers with the carriers, and consumer service, disability, and discrimination 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 83.3 percent in September, down from September 2011's 83.9 percent mark, but up from August 2012's 79.1 percent.

Cancellations

The reporting carriers canceled 0.8 percent of their scheduled domestic flights in September, equal to the 0.8 percent cancellation rate posted in September 2011, but down from August 2012's cancellation rate of 1.3 percent.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of September, there were 23 flights that were chronically delayed – more than 30 minutes late more than 50 percent of the time – for three consecutive months. There were an additional 14 flights that were chronically delayed for two consecutive months. There were no chronically delayed flights for four 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 September, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 4.98 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 5.26 percent in August; 5.72 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 7.68 percent in August; 4.65 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.79 percent in August; 0.34 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.53 percent in August; and 0.03 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.04 percent in August. 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 September, 27.66 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 23.49 percent from September 2011, when 36.15 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 16.05 percent from August when 32.95 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 2.7 reports per 1,000 passengers in September, down from both September 2011's rate of 2.8 and August 2012's rate of 3.4. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.06 reports per 1,000 passengers, down from the 3.51 rate recorded during the first nine months of 2011.

Bumping

The report also includes reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for the third quarter and first nine months of this year from U.S. carriers who also report flight delay information. These carriers posted a bumping rate of 0.98 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, up from the 0.71 rate for the third quarter of 2011. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers had a bumping rate of 0.98 per 10,000 passengers, up from the rate of 0.77 posted during the first nine months of 2011.

Incidents Involving Pets

In September, carriers reported two incidents involving the loss, death, or injury of pets while traveling by air, down from both the three reports filed in September 2011, and the five reports filed in August 2012. September's incidents involved one pet death and one pet injury.

Complaints About Airline Service

In September, the Department received 1,075 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 10.5 percent from the 973 complaints filed in September 2011, but down 43.0 percent from the 1,886 received in August 2012. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 12,145 consumer complaints, up 33.5 percent from the total of 9,096 filed during the first nine months of 2011.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in September against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 73 disability-related complaints in September, up from the total of 54 complaints filed in September 2011, but equal to the total of 73 complaints received in August 2012. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 590 disability-related complaints, up 27.7 percent from the total of 462 filed during the first nine months of 2011.

Complaints About Discrimination

In September, the Department received seven 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 16 recorded in September 2011 and the nine recorded in August 2012. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 82 complaints about discrimination, down 15.5 percent from the total of 97 filed during the first nine months of 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 September 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

83.3 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 96.4 percent
2. AirTran Airways – 90.9 percent
3. Delta Air Lines – 89.7 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. American Airlines – 58.0 percent
2. ExpressJet Airlines – 81.0 percent
3. United Airlines – 82.0 percent

Domestic Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Three Hours

*There were no domestic flights in September with tarmac delays exceeding three hours.

International Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays Exceeding Four Hours

*There were no international flights in September with tarmac delays exceeding four hours.

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. American Airlines – 3.1 percent
2. ExpressJet Airlines – 1.3 percent
3. SkyWest Airlines – 1.0 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.0 percent
2. Virgin America – 0.1 percent
3. Frontier Airlines – 0.1 percent

-END-