

DOT 150-11

Thursday, November 17, 2011

Contact: Bill Mosley

Tel: (202) 366-4570

**Airlines Report Three Tarmac Delays Longer than Three Hours
On Domestic Flights in September**
Carriers Report Expanded Tarmac Delay Data Under New DOT Consumer Rule

Airlines reported a total of three tarmac delays longer than three hours on domestic flights in September, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Air Travel Consumer Report.

The larger U.S. airlines have been required to report tarmac delays of more than three hours on their domestic flights since April 29, 2010. 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. Today's report is the first since the new rule went into effect.

Also beginning Aug. 23, carriers operating international flights may not allow tarmac delays at U.S. airports to last longer than four hours. This is in addition to the three-hour limit on domestic tarmac delays, which went into effect in April 2010. There were no reports of international flights with tarmac delays of more than four hours between Aug. 23 and Sept. 30.

See the DOT [press release](#) for Secretary Ray LaHood's statement.

Exceptions to the time limits for both domestic and international flights are allowed only for safety, security or air traffic control-related reasons.

All three of the reported tarmac delays involved flights departing from Washington Dulles International Airport on Sept. 14, when there were severe thunderstorms in the area.

The monthly report also includes data on on-time performance, chronically delayed flights, flight cancellations, and the causes of flight delays filed with the Department by the reporting carriers. In addition, the report contains information on airline bumping, reports of mishandled baggage filed by consumers with the carriers, and consumer 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.

On-Time Performance

Information filed with BTS shows that the 16 carriers reporting on-time performance recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 83.9 percent in September, down slightly from the 85.1 percent on-time rate of September 2010, but up from August 2011's 79.3 percent rate.

Cancellations

During September, the carriers canceled 0.8 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, down from both September 2010's 0.9 percent cancellation rate and August 2011's 2.5 percent.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of September, there were six 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 four 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 5.16 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 5.19 percent in August; 5.24 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 6.63 percent in August; 4.29 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.28 percent in August; 0.37 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.70 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, 36.15 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, up 4.69 percent from September 2010, when 34.53 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 8.41 percent from August when 39.47 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 2.81 reports per 1,000 passengers in September, down from both September 2010's rate of 2.83 and August 2011's rate of 3.44. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.49 reports per 1,000 passengers, down from the 3.52 rate recorded during the first nine months of 2010.

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 0.80 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, down from the 0.87 rate for the third quarter of 2010. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers had a bumping rate of 0.85 per 10,000 passengers, down from the rate of 1.21 rate posted during the first nine months of 2010.

Incidents Involving Pets

In September, carriers reported three incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, down from both the four reports filed in September 2010 and August 2011's total of five. September's incidents involved two pet deaths and one pet injury.

Complaints About Airline Service

In September, the Department received 974 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 28.8 percent from the 756 complaints received in September 2010, but down 31.3 percent from the total of 1,417 filed in August 2011. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 9,097 consumer complaints, up 3.2 percent from the total of 8,815 filed during the first nine months of 2010.

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 56 disability-related complaints in September 2011, up from both the 40 disability complaints received in September 2010 and the total of 47 filed in August 2011. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 464 disability-related complaints, up 5.2 percent from the total of 441 filed during the first nine months of 2010.

Complaints About Discrimination

In September, the Department received 15 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 11 filed in September 2010 and the 12 discrimination complaints received in August 2011. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 96 complaints about discrimination, down 14.3 percent from the total of 112 filed during the first nine months of 2010.

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 <http://airconsumer.dot.gov>.

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 <http://airconsumer.dot.gov>. It is available in "pdf" and Microsoft Word format.

Facts

AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT September 2011

KEY ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS

**Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics
by the 16 Reporting Carriers**

Overall

83.9 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 95.5 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 91.7 percent
3. AirTran Airways – 89.5 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. JetBlue Airways – 77.8 percent
2. ExpressJet Airlines – 77.9 percent
3. Continental Airlines – 79.8 percent

Domestic Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

1. SkyWest Airlines flight 6200 from Washington Dulles to Colorado Springs, Co., 9/14/11 – delayed on tarmac 202 minutes
2. United Airlines flight 461 from Washington Dulles to Las Vegas, 9/14/11 – delayed on tarmac 196 minutes
3. ExpressJet Airlines flight 5930 from Washington Dulles to Louisville, Ky., 9/14/11 – delayed on tarmac 194 minutes

(There were only three flights with tarmac delays of more than three hours in September)

International Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

(There were no international flights with tarmac delay of more than four hours between Aug. 23 and Sept. 30).

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. ExpressJet Airlines – 2.4 percent
2. Mesa Airlines – 1.5 percent
3. American Eagle Airlines – 1.4 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.1 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.1 percent
3. JetBlue Airways – 0.2 percent

-END-