

DOT 32-11
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Long Tarmac Delays in January Down from Last Year

The nation's largest airlines reported only one flight in January with a tarmac delay of more than three hours, down from 20 flights in January 2010, according to the Air Travel Consumer Report released today by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

Data filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), a part of DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration, showed there have been only 16 total tarmac delays of more than three hours reported from May 2010 through January 2011 by the airlines that file on-time performance data with DOT, compared to 604 reported from May 2009 through January 2010. In January, the carriers also reported that .0600 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of two hours or more, equal to the .0600 percent reported in December 2010.

January was the ninth full month of data since the new aviation consumer rule went into effect on April 29, 2010. The new rule prohibits U.S. airlines operating domestic flights from permitting an aircraft to remain on the tarmac for more than three hours without deplaning passengers, with exceptions allowed only for safety or security or if air traffic control advises the pilot in command that returning to the terminal would disrupt airport operations. The Department will investigate tarmac delays that exceed this limit.

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 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 76.3 percent in January, down from the 78.7 percent on-time rate of January 2010, but up from December 2010's 72.0 percent rate.

Cancellations

During January, when large parts of the country experienced severe winter weather, the carriers canceled 3.9 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, compared to 2.5 percent in January 2010 and 3.7 percent in December 2010. The number of canceled flights with tarmac delays of more than two hours increased only slightly, from 268 between May 2009 and January 2010 to 312 between May 2010 and January 2011. There were 46 canceled flights with tarmac delays of more than two hours in January 2011, up from 17 in January 2010.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of January, there was only one flight that was chronically delayed – more than 30 minutes late more than 50 percent of the time – for three consecutive months. There were an additional 15 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 January, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 6.12 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 7.07 percent in December; 7.20 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 9.18 percent in December; 5.65 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 6.97 percent in December; 0.60 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.76 percent in December; and 0.07 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.08 percent in December. 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 January, 33.06 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 15.90 percent from January 2010, when 39.31 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 9.84 percent from December when 36.67 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 4.20 reports per 1,000 passengers in January, down from both January 2010's rate of 4.56 and December 2010's rate of 4.80.

Incidents Involving Pets

In January, carriers reported two incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, equal to the two reports filed in January 2010 and down from the seven reports filed in December 2010. January's incidents one pet death and one pet injury.

Complaints About Airline Service

In January, the Department received 855 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 7.8 percent from the 928 complaints filed in January 2010, but up 13.5 percent from the 753 received in December 2010.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in January against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 39 disability-related complaints in January, down from the total of 46 filed in January 2010 but up from the 38 complaints received in December 2010.

Complaints About Discrimination

In January, the Department received 11 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – up from the total of seven recorded in January 2010, but down from the total of 14 recorded in December 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 January 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

76.3 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 91.2 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 85.3 percent
3. United Airlines – 84.5 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. JetBlue Airways – 65.0 percent
2. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 71.4 percent

3. SkyWest Airlines – 73.5 percent

Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

1. Delta Air Lines flight 2523 from Atlanta to Honolulu, 1/10/11 – delayed on tarmac 211 minutes

(There was only one flight with a tarmac delay of more than three hours in January)

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 9.3 percent
2. Delta Air Lines – 6.3 percent
3. AirTran Airways – 5.7 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.0 percent*
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.9 percent
3. Alaska Airlines – 1.1 percent

*Hawaiian Airlines had two canceled flights in January.

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