

**DOT 17-11**

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## **Airline On-Time Performance Improves in 2010**

The on-time performance of the nation's largest airlines improved in 2010 compared to the previous year, according to the Air Travel Consumer Report released today by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

Information filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), a part of DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA), shows that the 18 largest carriers reporting on-time performance recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 79.8 percent for January through December 2010, an improvement on 2009's 79.5 percent on-time arrival rate. During December 2010, these carriers posted an on-time performance rate of 72.0 percent, equal to the 72.0 percent on-time rate recorded in December 2009, but down from November 2010's 83.2 percent rate.

The monthly report also includes data on chronically delayed flights, lengthy tarmac delays, 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.

### **Tarmac Delays**

In December, the airlines who file on-time data with the Department reported three domestic flights with tarmac delays of more than three hours, down from 34 in December 2009. Data filed with BTS showed there have been only 15 total tarmac delays of more than three hours reported from May through December 2010 by the 18 airlines that file on-time performance data with DOT, compared to 584 during the same eight-month period of 2009. In December, the carriers also reported that .0600 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of two hours or more, up from .0200 percent in November.

December was the eighth 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 at a large or medium hub airport 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 Department has also issued a rulemaking that would significantly strengthen the protection afforded to passengers stranded on the ground aboard aircraft for lengthy periods. In a June 2010 notice of proposed rulemaking, the Department proposed to increase the number of carriers that are required to adopt tarmac delay contingency plans to include foreign air carriers and proposed to increase the number of airports at which carriers must adhere to such plans to include U.S. small and non-hub airports. In addition, the Department proposed to require all carriers that must adopt tarmac delay contingency plans to file data with the Department regarding lengthy tarmac delays. The Department expects to issue a final rule as early as April 2011, which will consider all the comments received as well as the lengthy tarmac

delays experienced by a number of foreign carriers at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) during and after the Dec. 26, 2010, blizzard and the resulting impact on passengers traveling on those flights.

### **Cancellations**

During December, when large parts of the country experienced severe winter weather, the carriers canceled 3.7 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, compared to 2.8 percent in December 2009 and 0.7 percent in November 2010. The number of canceled flights with tarmac delays of more than two hours increased only slightly, from 251 between May and December 2009 to 266 between May and December 2010. There were 25 canceled flights with tarmac delays of more than two hours in December 2010, down from 27 in December 2009.

### **Chronically Delayed Flights**

At the end of December, 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 six 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](http://www.bts.gov)).

### **Causes of Flight Delays**

In December, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 7.07 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 5.38 percent in November; 9.18 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 5.64 percent in November; 6.97 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 4.58 percent in November; 0.76 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.31 percent in November; and 0.08 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.03 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 show 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, 36.67 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 19.05 percent from December 2009, when 45.30 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and up 15.61 percent from November when 31.72 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 4.80 reports per 1,000 passengers in December, down from December 2009's rate of 5.27, but up from November 2010's rate of 2.93. For all of last year, the carriers posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.57 per 1,000 passengers, an improvement over 2009's rate of 3.99.

### **Bumping**

The report also includes airline reports of involuntary denied boarding, or bumping, for calendar year 2010 and the fourth quarter of last year. The 18 U.S. carriers who report on-time performance and mishandled baggage data posted a bumping rate of 1.09 per 10,000 passengers last year, down from the 1.23 rate posted in 2009. For the fourth quarter of last year, the carriers posted a bumping rate of 0.79 per 10,000 passengers, down from the 1.13 rate for the fourth quarter of 2009.

### **Incidents Involving Pets**

In December, carriers reported seven incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, up from both the three reports filed in December 2009 and the six reports filed in November 2010. December's incidents involved six pet deaths and one pet injury. For all of last year, carriers reported 39 pet deaths, 13 pet injuries, and five lost pets. In 2009, carriers reported 22 pet deaths, six pet injuries, and four lost pets.

### **Complaints About Airline Service**

In December, the Department received 753 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 8.8 percent from the 692 complaints filed in December 2009, and up 3.7 percent from the 667 received in November 2010. For all of last year, the Department received 10,985 complaints, 24.5 percent higher than the 8,821 complaints received in 2009.

### **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 38 disability-related complaints in December, equal to the total of 38 filed in December 2009 but down from the 43 complaints received in November 2010. For all of last year, the Department received 572 disability complaints, up 10.2 percent from the total of 519 received in 2009.

### **Complaints About Discrimination**

In December, the Department received 14 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – up from the totals of 11 recorded in both December 2009 and in November 2010. For all of last year, the Department received 143 discrimination complaints, up 9.1 percent from the total of 131 filed in 2009.

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

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### AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT December 2010

#### KEY ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics by the 18 Reporting Carriers

##### Overall

72.0 percent on-time arrivals

##### Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 87.6 percent
2. United Airlines – 83.1 percent
3. AirTran Airways – 82.1 percent

##### Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. JetBlue Airways – 58.6 percent
2. Comair – 63.1 percent
3. SkyWest Airlines – 64.4 percent

##### Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

1. Delta Air Lines flight 1329 from Detroit to Miami, 12/12/10 – delayed on tarmac 192 minutes
2. United Airlines flight 147 from San Diego to San Francisco, 12/27/10 – delayed on tarmac 189 minutes
3. Pinnacle Airlines flight 3829 from Detroit to Cedar Rapids, IA, 12/12/10 – delayed on tarmac 186 minutes

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

##### Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. JetBlue Airways – 8.5 percent
2. Comair – 7.7 percent
3. Pinnacle Airlines – 7.4 percent

##### Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.2 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.6 percent
3. Alaska Airlines – 0.8 percent

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