

DOT 207-10
Tuesday, December 7, 2010
Contact: Bill Mosley
Tel: (202) 366-4570

No Tarmac Delays Longer Than Three Hours in October

The nation's largest airlines reported no flights in October with tarmac delays of more than three hours, down from 11 flights in October 2009, with a slight decrease in the rate of canceled flights, according to the Air Travel Consumer Report released today by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). This is the first month there were no tarmac delays of more than three hours by the reporting carriers since the Department began collecting more comprehensive tarmac delay data in October 2008.

Data filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) showed there have been only 12 total tarmac delays of more than three hours reported from May through October this year by the 18 airlines that file on-time performance data with DOT, compared to 546 during the same five-month period of 2009. October was the sixth full month of data since the new aviation consumer rule went into effect on April 29. BTS is a part of DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA).

The largest carriers canceled 0.97 percent of their scheduled domestic flights in October, down from the 0.99 percent cancellation rate of October 2009. They posted a 0.90 percent cancellation rate in September 2010. The number of canceled flights with tarmac delays of more than two hours increased only slightly this year, from 224 between May and October 2009 to 230 between May and October 2010. There were five canceled flights with tarmac delays of more than two hours in October 2010, slightly up from the total of four in October 2009.

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

The new tarmac delay 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, it has 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

The reporting carriers recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 83.8 percent in October, up from the 77.3 percent on-time rate of October 2009 but down from September 2010's 85.1 percent.

Tarmac Delays

In October, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .0300 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of two hours or more, down from .0600 percent in September. There were no flights with tarmac delays of more than three hours in October.

Chronically Delayed Flights

At the end of October, 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 no other flights chronically delayed for two consecutive months and 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 October, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 4.79 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 4.81 percent in September; 5.54 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 4.60 percent in September, 4.44 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 3.99 percent in September; 0.31 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.41 percent in September; and 0.03 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.02 percent in September. 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 October, 33.06 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 19.64 percent from October 2009, when 41.14 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 4.26 percent from September when 34.53 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 2.91 reports per 1,000 passengers in October, an improvement over October 2009's rate of 3.51, but up from September 2010's 2.89 rate.

Incidents Involving Pets

In October, carriers reported seven incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, up from both the zero reports filed in October 2009 and the four reports filed in September 2010. October's incidents involved three pet deaths, three injuries and one lost pet.

Complaints About Airline Service

In October, the Department received 749 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 16.5 percent from the 898 complaints filed in October 2009, and down 0.8 percent from the 755 received in September 2010.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in October against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 49 disability-related complaints in October, down from the total of 55 filed in October 2009 but up from the 41 complaints received in September 2010.

Complaints About Discrimination

In October, the Department received six complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – down from the total of 10 recorded in both October 2009 and September 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 October 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

83.8 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 95.4 percent
2. AirTran Airways – 90.4 percent
3. United Airlines – 89.9 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. JetBlue Airways – 76.7 percent
2. Southwest Airlines – 77.5 percent
3. Comair – 78.0 percent

Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

*There were no flights with tarmac delays of more than three hours in October.

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Comair – 2.4 percent
2. Pinnacle Airlines – 2.1 percent
3. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 2.0 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.0 percent*
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.1 percent
3. Continental Airlines – 0.1 percent

*Hawaiian Airlines had one canceled flight in October.

-END-