

**DOT 196-10**

**Tuesday, November 9, 2010**

**Contact: Bill Mosley**

**Tel: (202) 366-4570**

## **Long Tarmac Delays in September Down From Last Year**

The nation's largest airlines reported four flights in September with tarmac delays of more than three hours, down from six flights in September 2009, with only a slight increase in the rate of canceled flights, 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) showed the only tarmac delays longer than three hours reported in September by the 18 airlines that file on-time performance data with DOT involved delays caused by weather in New York and Philadelphia on Sept. 22. September was the fifth full month of data since the new aviation consumer rule went into effect on April 29. There have been only 12 total tarmac delays of more than three hours reported from May through September this year, compared to 535 during the same five-month period of 2009. BTS is a part of DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA).

The largest carriers canceled 0.9 percent of their scheduled domestic flights in September, up from the 0.6 percent cancellation rate of September 2009. They posted a 1.0 percent cancellation rate in August 2010.

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 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**

The reporting carriers recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 85.1 percent in September, down from the 86.2 percent on-time rate of September 2009 but up from August 2010's 81.7 percent.

### **Tarmac Delays**

In September, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .0600 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of two hours or more, up from .0400 percent in August. There were four flights with tarmac delays of more than three hours in September.

## **Chronically Delayed Flights**

At the end of September, there was only one flight that was chronically delayed – more than 30 minutes late more than 50 percent of the time – for two consecutive months. There were no chronically delayed flights for three 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 September, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 4.81 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 5.07 percent in August; 4.60 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 6.42 percent in August, 3.99 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.16 percent in August; 0.41 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.46 percent in August; and 0.02 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 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 September, 34.53 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 0.17 percent from September 2009, when 34.59 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 1.54 percent from August when 35.07 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 2.89 reports per 1,000 passengers in September, an improvement over both September 2009's rate of 3.06 and August 2010's 3.50 rate. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers posted a mishandled baggage rate of 3.59 reports per 1,000 passengers, down from the 4.02 rate recorded during the first nine months of 2009.

## **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 0.87 per 10,000 passengers for the quarter, down from the 1.01 rate for the third quarter of 2009. For the first nine months of this year, the carriers had a bumping rate of 1.19 per 10,000 passengers, down from the rate of 1.26 rate posted during the first nine months of 2009.

## **Incidents Involving Pets**

In September, carriers reported four incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, equal to the four reports filed in September 2009, but up from the one in August 2010. September's incidents involved the death of three pets and the injury of one pet.

## **Complaints About Airline Service**

In September, the Department received 755 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 25.2 percent from the 603 complaints filed in September 2009 but down 37.1 percent from the 1,200 received in August 2010. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 8,811 consumer complaints, up 32.0 percent from the total of 6,676 filed during the first nine months of 2009.

## **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 41 disability-related complaints in September, up from the total of 28 filed in September 2009 but down from the 71 complaints received in August 2010. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 440 disability-related complaints, up 13.7 percent from the total of 387 filed during the first nine months of 2009.

## **Complaints About Discrimination**

In September, the Department received 10 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 11 recorded in September 2009 and 17 recorded in August 2010. For the first nine months of this year, the Department received 111 complaints about discrimination, up 12.1 percent from the total of 99 filed during the first nine months of 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**

---

### **AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT September 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**

85.1 percent on-time arrivals

### **Highest On-Time Arrival Rates**

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 95.8 percent
2. AirTran Airways – 90.7 percent
3. Alaska Airlines – 90.5 percent

### **Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates**

1. Comair – 78.2 percent
2. JetBlue Airways – 78.8 percent
3. Delta Air Lines – 81.5 percent

### **Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays**

1. Southwest Airlines flight 337 from Philadelphia to St. Louis, 9/22/10 – delayed on tarmac 199 minutes
2. US Airways flight 373 from New York JFK to Charlotte, 9/22/10 – delayed on tarmac 197 minutes
3. Pinnacle Airlines flight 3968 from New York JFK to Chicago O’Hare, 9/22/10 – delayed on tarmac 185 minutes
4. Delta Air Lines flight 2189 from Philadelphia to Detroit, 9/22/10 – delayed on tarmac 183 minutes

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

### **Highest Rates of Canceled Flights**

1. Comair – 2.0 percent
2. Pinnacle Airlines – 2.0 percent
3. American Eagle Airlines – 1.7 percent

### **Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights**

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.0 percent\*
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.2 percent
3. AirTran Airways – 0.2 percent

\*Hawaiian Airlines had two canceled flights in September.

**-END-**