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Contact: Bill Mosley
Tel.: (202) 366-4570

Airlines Set Records for On-Time Performance, Low Mishandled Baggage Rates in November

The nation's largest airlines set a single-month record in November for on-time performance for the nearly 15 years the U.S. Department of Transportation has collected comparable data, according to the Air Travel Consumer Report released today by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). They also set a record for the lowest rate of mishandled baggage in a single month since these data were first collected in September 1987.

According to information filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), a part of DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA), the 19 carriers reporting on-time performance recorded an overall on-time arrival rate of 88.6 percent in November, higher than both November 2008's 83.3 percent and October 2009's 77.3 percent. Since comparable data were first collected in January 1995, the previous high on-time mark for reporting carriers was 88.0 percent in September 2002.

In addition, the U.S. carriers reporting flight delays and mishandled baggage data posted a mishandled baggage rate of 2.78 reports per 1,000 passengers in November, an improvement over both November 2008's rate of 3.75 and October 2009's 3.48 rate. The previous record low rate for mishandled baggage was September 2009's 3.01 mark.

The monthly report also includes data on lengthy tarmac delays, flight cancellations and the causes of flight delays by the reporting 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.

Cancellations

The consumer report includes BTS data on the number of domestic flights canceled by the reporting carriers. In November, the carriers canceled 0.5 percent of their scheduled domestic flights, a lower rate than both the 0.8 percent cancellation rate of November 2008 and the 1.0 percent rate posted in October 2009.

Tarmac Delays

In November, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .00079 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of three hours or more, down from .0013 in November

2008 and .002 percent in October 2009. There were no flights with tarmac delays of four hours or more in November.

Causes of Flight Delays

In November, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 3.91 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 8.52 percent in October; 3.23 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 7.20 percent in October; 3.39 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.26 percent in October; 0.20 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.52 percent in October; and 0.01 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.03 percent in October. 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 November, 33.43 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 20.56 percent from November 2008, when 42.08 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 18.74 percent from October when 41.14 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>.

Incidents Involving Pets

In November, carriers reported four incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, down from the total of six reports filed in November 2008 but up from the total of zero in October 2009. November's incidents involved three deaths and one injury.

Complaints About Airline Service

In November, the Department received 552 complaints about airline service from consumers, up 3.6 percent from the 533 complaints filed in November 2008 but 38.4 percent fewer than the total of 896 received in October 2009.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in November against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 36 disability-related complaints in November, up from the 29 complaints filed in November 2008 but fewer than the total of 52 received in October 2009.

Complaints About Discrimination

In November, 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 both the total of seven recorded in November 2008 and 10 received in October 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 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 November 2009

KEY ON-TIME PERFORMANCE AND FLIGHT CANCELLATION STATISTICS Based on Data Filed with the Bureau of Transportation Statistics by the 19 Reporting Carriers

Overall

88.6 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 93.3 percent
2. United Airlines – 92.6 percent
3. Southwest Airlines – 92.0 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 80.5 percent
2. AirTran Airways – 80.6 percent
3. Comair – 85.1 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

There were no regularly scheduled flights that arrived late 80 percent of the time or more in November.

Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

There were no flights with tarmac delays of four hours or more in November.

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Mesa Airlines – 0.9 percent

2. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 0.9 percent
3. Alaska Airlines – 0.8 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

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

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