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

Airline On-Time Performance Improved in August

The nation's largest airlines had a higher on-time performance rate in August 2009 than both July 2009 and August 2008, according to the Air Travel Consumer Report released today by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

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 79.7 percent in August, better than both the 78.4 percent on-time rate of August 2008 and July 2009's 77.6 percent.

The monthly report also includes data on lengthy tarmac delays, flight cancellations and the causes of flight delays by the reporting carriers, as well as reports of mishandled baggage filed 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.

Cancellations

The consumer report includes BTS data on the number of domestic flights canceled by the reporting carriers. In August, the carriers canceled one percent of their scheduled domestic flights, lower than both the 1.6 percent cancellation rate of August 2008 and the 1.2 percent rate posted in July 2009.

Tarmac Delays

In August, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that .012 percent of their scheduled flights had tarmac delays of three hours or more, down from .028 percent in July. There were six flights with tarmac delays of four hours or more in August.

Causes of Flight Delays

In August, the carriers filing on-time performance data reported that 6.43 percent of their flights were delayed by aviation system delays, compared to 6.89 percent in July; 6.45 percent by late-arriving aircraft, compared to 7.33 percent in July; 5.46 percent by factors within the airline's control, such as maintenance or crew problems, compared to 5.93 percent in July; 0.69 percent by extreme weather, compared to 0.74 percent in July; and 0.05 percent for security reasons, compared to 0.04 percent in July. 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

August, 39.27 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, down 0.23 percent from August 2008, when 39.36 percent of late flights were delayed by weather, and down 0.38 percent from July when 39.42 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 4.04 reports per 1,000 passengers in August, an improvement over August 2008's rate of 4.98 but up from July 2009's 3.98 rate.

Incidents Involving Pets

In August, carriers reported three incidents involving the loss, death or injury of pets while traveling by air, down from both the four reports filed in August 2008 and six in July 2009. All of August's incidents involved pet deaths.

Complaints About Airline Service

In August, the Department received 888 complaints about airline service from consumers, down 11.7 percent from the 1,006 complaints filed in August 2008 but up 7.4 percent from the 827 received in July 2009.

Complaints About Treatment of Disabled Passengers

The report also contains a tabulation of complaints filed with DOT in August against airlines regarding the treatment of passengers with disabilities. The Department received a total of 47 disability-related complaints in August, up from the total of 41 filed in August 2008 but fewer than the 53 complaints received in July 2009.

Complaints About Discrimination

In August, the Department received 16 complaints alleging discrimination by airlines due to factors other than disability – such as race, religion, national origin or sex – down from the totals of 17 recorded in both August 2008 and July 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 August 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

79.7 percent on-time arrivals

Highest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Hawaiian Airlines – 94.7 percent
2. Alaska Airlines – 85.8 percent
3. SkyWest Airlines – 84.4 percent

Lowest On-Time Arrival Rates

1. Comair – 65.9 percent
2. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 69.5 percent
3. AirTran Airways – 74.2 percent

Most Frequently Delayed Flights

1. Pinnacle Airlines flight 896 from Knoxville, TN to Atlanta – late 94.12 percent of the time
2. Pinnacle Airlines flight 2923 from Detroit to La Crosse, WI/Winona, MN – late 88.24 percent of the time
3. Comair flight 6332 from New York JFK to Boston – late 87.50 percent of the time
4. AirTran Airways flight 333 from Philadelphia to Atlanta – late 87.10 percent of the time
5. Comair flight 6511 from Omaha, NE to Atlanta – late 85.00 percent of the time

Flights with Longest Tarmac Delays

1. ExpressJet Airlines flight 2816 from Houston to Minneapolis/St. Paul, 8/7/09 – delayed on tarmac 337 minutes
2. AirTran Airways flight 782 from Atlanta to St. Louis, 8/12/09 – delayed on tarmac 253 minutes
3. US Airways flight 2135 from Boston to New York LaGuardia, 8/21/09 – delayed on tarmac 252 minutes
4. US Airways flight 2131 from Boston to New York LaGuardia, 8/21/09 – delayed on tarmac 244 minutes
5. JetBlue Airways flight 1258 from Washington Dulles to Boston, 8/21/09 – delayed on tarmac 241 minutes

Highest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Comair – 4.3 percent
2. Pinnacle Airlines – 1.8 percent
3. Atlantic Southeast Airlines – 1.8 percent

Lowest Rates of Canceled Flights

1. Continental Airlines – 0.2 percent
2. Frontier Airlines – 0.3 percent
3. Hawaiian Airlines – 0.3 percent

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