

CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20428

FOR RELEASE:

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ON OR AFTER
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CONSUMER COMPLAINTS UP FOR 1976 DESPITE DECEMBER DROP

WASHINGTON, D.C. (January 28)--The Civil Aeronautics Board today issued a report that air transportation consumer complaints rose nearly 35 percent in 1976, to a record total of 16,124.

The 1976 totals compare with the 11,916 complaints logged in 1975. The previous highest report was 15,720 for 1974.

In its final consumer report for the year, the Board cited a nine percent drop in consumer complaints for December, with 1,125, compared with November's 1,221. The December figures represent a four percent increase over December 1975, when 1,095 complaints were reported.

The Board attributed the year's increase to heightened public awareness of the existence and functions of its consumer activities and pointed out that the volume of complaints it handles is not necessarily a valid gauge of any change in the quality of airline service or airline responsiveness to consumer problems. Many consumer problems are handled by the airlines' own consumer mechanisms without the consumer needing to seek assistance elsewhere.

The Board has handled a total of 69,040 consumer complaints in the past five years.

MORE

Reservations-related problems for the past year totaled 2,504, a 33 percent increase over the 1,878 reported in 1975. Last year's 2,192 flight complaints were 26 percent more than the previous year's 1,744. Baggage problems accounted for 2,014 complaints last year, compared with 1,628 in 1975, a 24 percent rise. Decreases from 1975 were noted in complaints involving cargo (seven percent), flight information (14 percent) and service in general (26 percent).

Consumers who have unresolved air transportation difficulties relating to fares, flight cancellations, delays, baggage handling and similar problems can write to the Civil Aeronautics Board, Office of the Consumer Advocate, 1825 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20428.

ATTACHMENTS

CONSUMER REPORT 4For the Month of December 1976[illegible]

g/ These statistics reflect alleged problems with airline service as stated in complaint letters. No determination as to the validity of the complaint has been made nor should the report be construed as a "rating" of one carrier's performance in relation to that of any other since each class of carrier and, to some extent, each carrier has problems unique to its operation.

b/ Enplanements and Revenue Passenger Miles are taken from CAB Form 41 report for October 1976; the most recent available to the Board. Both scheduled and nonscheduled services are included.

c/ Based on passenger complaints only; cargo complaints have been eliminated.

d/ Represents 785 letters received. Forty-seven letters had complaints against more than one carrier.

e/ Includes Allegheny commuter boardings of 127,251 during the month of October.

f/ Acquired by TLA on November 30, 1976.

AIR FARES--SOME THINGS TO KNOW

Air fares are regulated by the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) but it is the airlines (not the CAB) which initiate changes in their fares and the rules governing the use of those fares. Changes proposed by the airlines may be accepted or rejected by the CAB.

There are many air fares available but not every type of fare is available over every routing or offered by every airline every day of the year. Therefore, it is wise to compare prices, airlines and flight times. Besides checking that information for regularly scheduled flights, you might also check charter flights and prices.

Discount fares (priced lower than regular fares) usually vary by day of week, season of year and the length of time you are required to stay. Airlines often use their own trade names for identical discount fares. Make sure you know all the conditions that apply to the discount fare because you must comply with those conditions exactly to be eligible for the discount. Failure to comply with the conditions can result in your having to pay additional charges, possibly even the full fare. Consult the airline or your travel agent regarding availability, prices, and fare conditions.

All air fares, their terms and conditions, are subject to change. Airline tariff rules provide that you must pay the fare that is in effect on the day you travel, regardless of when you made a reservation or when the ticket was purchased. If you believe the fare that was quoted may be in error, check with another ticket agent at a competing airline over that routing. Don't be afraid to ask again--until you are satisfied that the information is correct. Misquotation of fares by a ticket agent does not relieve the airline from its obligation to charge the correct fare. The airlines are required to keep their tariffs (schedule of rates, charges and rules) available for public inspection at all airline ticket locations.

Air fares include an 8 percent federal transportation tax for domestic travel and a \$3 tax for international travel. With those items included, the fares are usually rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

Keeping your travel plans flexible and making trip arrangements far in advance can often save you money and avoid inconvenience.

(Adapted from "Consumer Facts on Air Fares", available on request from the Distribution Unit, CAB Publications Services Section, Washington, D.C. 20428)