

CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20428

FOR RELEASE:

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ON OR AFTER
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AIRLINE CONSUMER COMPLAINT REPORT FOR 1978

WASHINGTON, D. C. (March 19)--Flight delays, cancellations and schedule irregularities led the list of airline consumer complaints filed with the Civil Aeronautics Board's Bureau of Consumer Protection (BCP) in 1978. Of the 23,609 complaints received 4,157, or 17.6 percent, related to flights. In 1977, the same category lead all others with 15.8 percent.

There were over 257 million domestic passengers on certificated airlines last year. As in 1977, reservations (16.1 percent) and baggage (13.2 percent) were the second and third most frequent concerns of complaints filed with the Board.

Complaints relating to charters fell off dramatically, from 12.7 percent in 1977 to 6.8 percent in 1978. Due in large part to the many discounts on scheduled airline service, the number of domestic charter passengers dropped 16 percent.

Other major categories of consumer complaints in 1978 were fares (9.6 percent), customer treatment (6.9) and refunds (4.7).

Problems relating to oversales, included in the reservations category, comprised 5.6 percent of total complaints received in 1978, compared with 5.8 percent in 1977.

MORE

The total number of complaints covered by the report was 32 percent more than in 1977, an increase BCP attributes to two factors. First, domestic airline traffic rose 16 percent in 1978. Second, since October the Bureau has included in its calculations telephoned and written complaints received at its 6 new field offices, rather than just letters sent to its Washington headquarters.

The Bureau has expanded its regional system to include six new field offices in Chicago, Ft. Worth, Miami, New York, Los Angeles and Seattle to handle complaints locally, along with a special office in Anchorage. Air travelers no longer need contact Washington when they have a problem.

If a problem cannot be handled at a regional office, consumers can write to the Civil Aeronautics Board, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Washington, D. C. 20428, or call (202) 673-6047.

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NOTES TO CONSUMER REPORT

a/ 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/ Dates on complaint letters do not necessarily coincide with the most recent enplanement data available to the Board. Enplanements are taken from CAB Form 41 reports for August, September and October 1978. Both scheduled and nonscheduled services are included.

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

d/ Represents 1,171 letters and telephone complaints received in October, 1,498 letters and telephone complaints received in November and 1,512 letters and telephone complaints received in December by the Bureau of Consumer Protection including its field offices. One hundred two October letters, one hundred sixteen November letters and ninety-five December letters had complaints against more than one carrier.

e/ Includes Allegheny commuter boardings of 178,158 during the month of August, 161,243 during the month of September and 169,825 during the month of October.

f/ On strike April 29, 1978 until August 15, 1978. Operations curtailed during period of strike.

g/ Ceased operations September 1978.