New DOT rule will fine airlines for flights confining passengers more than 3 hours.

By D.R. Stewart
Vice Staff Writer

It’s going to be an interesting spring for the U.S. airline industry and its passengers.

On April 29—just about the time the oil season from the Gulf of Mexico begins—new rules from the Department of Transportation will implement its new Tarmac Delay Rule.

The new rule will subject airlines to fines of up to $27,500 per passenger for the carrier if passengers are confined on delayed aircraft for more than three hours. The rule also requires airlines to publish data about delayed flights on their Web sites.

Some airlines are asking DOT for exemptions to the new rule.

Last week, American Airlines joined JetBlue Airways and Delta Air Lines in seeking a temporary exemption from the Tarmac Delay Rule at John F. Kennedy International Airport while the main runway is under construction.

The threat of even bigger fines is the largest operator’s at JFK.

American is the first airline to use the new regulations to limit the number of flights that can take off at JFK.

In January, American Airlines operated 457 flights and had two tarmac delays of three hours or longer. Former American Airlines President Tim Smith, speaking data from JFK Tuesday, said those delays were costing the carrier money.

The new rule also is likely to have unintended consequences, industry officials say. Alexis Higgins, marketing director for the Tulsa Airport Authority, said a snowstorm that delayed an American flight Jan. 28 got a grip on the future under the new rule.

“Rain appears to us (airlines) are not taking any risk at all,” Higgins said.

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One way to ensure airlines comply with the new rules is to reduce the number of flights and maintain a weather contingency plan.

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Rod Walton
Rod Walton
rod.walton@midfirst.com

Greatest gamblers still at the heart of oil exploration

Somebody else might pick up "The Greatest Gamblers" and feel like they were reading of a big event a long time ago. Not Mike Benedum.

Early in the 19th century, Benedum finally cracked open the story of Ruth Sheldon Knowles, who as a young woman in Pennsylvania, where the massive oil exploration's original home, dared to bet on oil. Benedum's book, "Great Gamblers," is the story of a woman who in 1912 was a near billionaire.

The story of Knowles and her gamble, as told in Benedum's book, is still relevant today as the industry is flush with money.

Knowles was the daughter of a wealthy New York industrialist and was a graduate of Mount Holyoke College. She was a New York socialite who was introduced to oil exploration's original home, Pennsylvania, where the massive oil exploration's original home, by her brother-in-law, John D. Rockefeller.

Knowles and her brother-in-law were determined to make their fortune in oil exploration. They formed the Producer's Association of the U.S. oil industry and financed the drilling of several wells.

One of the wells, known as the Titusville No. 1, was drilled in Titusville, Pennsylvania, in 1855. The well was successful and led to the development of the oil industry in Pennsylvania.

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