

February 2008 Passenger Airline Employment Up 3.0 Percent from February 2007

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U.S. scheduled passenger airlines employed 3.0 percent more workers in February 2008 than in February 2007, the 13th consecutive increase in full-time equivalent employee (FTE) levels for the scheduled passenger carriers from the same month of the previous year, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) reported Tuesday (April 15).

The six network carriers all added FTEs from February 2007 to February 2008. All of the low-cost carriers except ATA Airlines, and regional carriers American Eagle Airlines, SkyWest Airlines, ExpressJet Airlines, Horizon Air, Pinnacle Airlines, Mesaba Airlines, Executive Airlines, Trans States Airlines, Shuttle America and GoJet Airlines increased their FTEs compared to last year.

Scheduled passenger airlines include network, low-cost, regional and other airlines. Many regional carriers were not required to report employment numbers before 2003, so year-to-year comparisons involving regional carriers, or the total industry, are not available for the years before 2003.

The six network carriers employed 249,800 FTEs in February, 59.7 percent of the passenger airline total, while low-cost carriers employed 22.9 percent and regional carriers employed 14.5 percent.

American Airlines employed the most FTEs in February among the network carriers, Southwest Airlines employed the most among low-cost carriers, and SkyWest employed the most among regional carriers. Six of the top 10 employers in the industry are network carriers.

America West Airlines and US Airways now operate under a single certificate. Joint reporting began with October 2007 data. The combined airline's employment numbers are included with the low-cost carriers while US Airways' previous numbers remain with network carriers and America West's previous numbers are listed separately as a low-cost carrier.

The merged airline, which is listed in the low-cost category, reported 32,828 FTEs for February 2008. In February 2007, US Airways reported 19,537 FTEs in the network category and America West reported 12,401 FTEs in the low-cost category for a total of 31,938.

Network Airlines

FTEs at the six remaining network carriers, not including US Airways in previous years, increased 2.9 percent in February 2008 compared to February 2007, the 10th consecutive monthly gain from the same month of the previous year. Prior to an increase in May, the network group had reduced FTEs from the previous year every month since September 2001.

All the network carriers increased FTEs from February 2007 to February 2008. The year-to-year increases were Delta Air Lines 7.8 percent, Alaska Airlines 6.4 percent, Continental Airlines 4.1 percent, United Airlines 1.0 percent, American 0.9 percent, and Northwest Airlines 0.8 percent.

FTEs at five network carriers declined during the four years from February 2004 to February 2008. The exception was Continental with a 6.1 percent increase. The biggest percentage decline was at Northwest, down 23.2 percent, a reduction of 8,900 FTEs, followed by Delta at 16.5 percent. The other FTE decreases during that time were United, down 10.5 percent, American, down 7.6 percent, and Alaska, down 0.1 percent.

Low-Cost Airlines

Low-cost carrier FTEs in February continued the 16-month trend of increasing from the same month of the previous year. The trend continued even without combining US Airways' numbers, which were listed in previous months in the network airline category, with America West's numbers for February.

All the low-cost carriers had FTE increases from February 2007 to February 2008 except ATA, down 9.2 percent. Frontier Airlines reported an increase of 13.9 percent.

Employment data for Independence Air, which changed its business model from a regional to low-cost carrier in mid-2004, have been included with low-cost carriers for 2004 and 2005 for consistency.

Low-cost carriers are those that the industry recognizes as operating under a low-cost business model, with lower infrastructure costs and higher productivity. Two new low-cost carriers, SkyBus Airlines and Virgin America, began reporting employment data in August. SkyBus reported 448 FTEs in February. Virgin America has requested confidentiality for its data.

Regional Airlines

Regional carrier FTEs were up 1.1 percent in February 2008 compared to February 2007.

SkyWest and Mesaba reported the largest increases in the group. SkyWest employed 9.4 percent more FTEs in February 2008 than February 2007, while Mesaba employed 18.0 percent more.

Regional carrier FTEs rose from 55,900 in February 2005 to 60,500 in February 2008, an increase of 8.3 percent.

The 12 regional carriers reporting employment data in both 2004 and 2008 employed 15.5 percent more FTEs in February 2008 than in February 2004. Of that group, Pinnacle reported the biggest gain, 80.6 percent, followed by SkyWest at 72.2 percent and ExpressJet at 29.2 percent. Atlantic Southeast Airlines, Air Wisconsin Airlines, Mesa Airlines and Executive Airlines reported fewer FTEs in February 2008 than February 2004.

Regional carrier Compass Airlines began reporting employment data in November. Compass reported 411 FTEs in February. Regional carrier Lynx Airlines began reporting employment data in February 2008. Lynx reported 301 FTEs in February.

Regional carriers typically provide service from small cities, using primarily regional jets to support the network carriers' hub and spoke systems.

Reporting Notes

Airlines that operate at least one aircraft with the capacity to carry combined passengers, cargo and fuel of 18,000 pounds - the payload factor - must report monthly employment statistics.

The Other Carrier category generally reflects those airlines that operate within specific niche markets, such as Continental Micronesia and Hawaiian Airlines in serving the Hawaiian Islands. Aloha failed to file its February report.

Data are compiled from monthly reports filed with BTS by commercial air carriers as of April 9.

Additional airline employment data can be found on the [BTS website](#).

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