

## **Mechanic ranks fall drastically at Northwest Airlines**

Washington DC - Northwest Airlines has seen the most dramatic drop in maintenance workers among US network airlines since 2000, with its mechanic ranks falling 95%.

Data released today by the US DOT show that Northwest's total maintenance, pilot and other employee staffing levels dropped 42.5% from 2000 to 2007 from 51,553 to 29,619, the highest among seven reporting network carriers to the department's Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) division.

Mechanic ranks at Northwest fell from 5,852 to 255, again the most drastic among network peers. BTS estimates that Northwest had 0.8 maintenance workers per aircraft last year, compared with 13.9 per aircraft in 2000.

A Northwest spokeswoman explains that "all airlines report to BTS differently, our internal number is 2.9 per aircraft".

Northwest also in 2005-2006 experienced a 444-day strike by its chapter of the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA), and during that time the carrier employed non-union workers and third party companies fill the positions of the striking employees.

Overall, US passenger carriers – network, low-cost and regional – had 8.3 maintenance workers per aircraft last year, down from 13 in 2000.

American, who logged a 7.7% drop in its maintenance ranks for the 2000-2007 timeframe, had the most mechanics among network carriers last year at 13,980.

Alaska Airlines and Continental were the only network carriers to strengthen the number of mechanics during the seven year timeframe, with levels rising at those airlines 24% and 10.6% respectively.

Fort Lauderdale-based Spirit Airlines was the only reporting low-cost carrier to log a drop in the number of mechanics employed between 2000-2007. The carrier reported a 35% drop from 246 to 161. JetBlue, which launched in 2000, reported the largest rise in the number of mechanics employed, an 836% jump from 50 to 468.

Overall, US low-cost carriers grew the number of mechanics employed by 2% from 3,375 to 3,445.

Outsourcing by both network and low-cost carriers grew during the seven year span BTS tracked mechanic staffing levels. Spending by network airlines on outsourcing grew to

45% of total maintenance spending last year, up from 30% in 2000. Those levels grew at a slower clip for low cost carriers, rising from 52% of total maintenance spend in 2000 to 54.2% last year.

BTS also examined pilot employee levels at US passenger airlines during the same timeframe. Overall, pilot ranks fell 3.7% from 66,119 to 63,648.

Pilot levels at network airlines fell roughly 30% from 50,201 to 35,186. Northwest again had the largest drop in pilots per aircraft falling to 12.4 last year from 14.2 in 2000. But United had the largest drop in total number of pilots employed during timeframe, a 43% decrease from 11,278 to 6,338. Still, the carrier has the highest number of pilots per aircraft among the carriers at 14.7, a 21.8% drop from the 18.8 per plane in 2000.

Alaska Airlines was the lone network carrier to post a rise in pilot ranks, growing the number of pilots employed from 1,239 to 1,385, a 12% rise. Continental, while having a 1.2% drop in overall pilot ranks, did increase the number of pilots per aircraft 6.2% from 12.9 to 13.7.

The six reporting low-cost carriers grew pilot ranks by 24% from 2000 to 2007 from 8,626 to 10,713, again with JetBlue posting the largest increase during the seven year timeframe from 203 to 1,707, a rise of 641%.

BTS explains that airlines operating at least one aircraft with a payload of 18,000 pounds and annual operating revenue more than \$20 million have to report their annual employment data.

**Source:** Air Transport Intelligence news