

Only half of July's flights punctual

Half of all flights across China were delayed or canceled in July, mostly affected by extreme weather, the top aviation authority said on Tuesday.

The flight punctuality rate was 50.76 percent, said Zhang Chunzhi, Party chief of the Civil Aviation Administration of China's operation and monitoring center.

Although the on-time figure in June was low, July's figure was lower. The punctuality rate was 57.23 percent in June, 11.2 percentage points lower than the same period last year.

Zhang said weather accounted for 58.6 percent of the delays in July.

"The northern, southern and southwestern region of China experienced more storms in summer than before. Airports in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Haikou, Chengdu, Chongqing, Kunming and Tianjin experienced extreme storms," she said.

Five typhoons struck China and affected airports in southeastern coastal areas, including Guangdong, Shenzhen, Haikou, Sanya, Fuzhou and Xiamen.

Air-traffic control also contributed to the lower punctuality rate, accounting for 25.99 percent of the delays, Zhang added.

Near-term forecasts call for storms to continue. "According to weather predictions, bad weather such as strong rainfall and storms will continue to affect flights in late August, mostly in middle and lower reaches of Yangtze River and south of the river. Two or three typhoons will affect the southeastern coastal area," Zhang said.

The bad weather forced many flights to reschedule, culminating on July 22, when airports across China marked a record by handling 15,181 flights.

Feng Zhenglin, head of the aviation administration, predicted in March that 75 percent or more of all flights during the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-20) would be on time.

Beijing Capital International Airport saw heavy rainfall on July 21, but handled 1,522 flights. Some 653 flights were delayed and 238 canceled, according to the CAAC's North China Regional Administration.

The next day, the airport handled 1,725 flights.

The CAAC's North China Regional Administration launched initiatives to cope with weather challenges, such as adjusting flight schedules a day ahead based on weather forecasts and telling airlines to reschedule flights. These moves give passengers time to reschedule their travel and help avoid having passengers travel to airports and then face last-minute cancellations.