

Airlines Cut Small Jets As Fuel Prices Soar

BY JOSHUA FREED
AP Airlines Writer

MINNEAPOLIS — The little planes that connect America's small cities to the rest of the world are slowly being phased out.

Airlines are getting rid of these planes — their least-efficient — in response to the high cost of fuel. Delta, United Continental, and other big airlines are expected to park, scrap or sell hundreds of jets with 50 seats or fewer in coming years. Small propeller planes are meeting the same fate.

The loss of those planes is leaving some little cities with fewer flights or no flights at all. The Airports Council International says 27 small airports in the continental U.S., including St. Cloud, Minn., and Oxnard, Calif., have lost service from well-known commercial airlines over the last two years. More shutdowns are planned.

Travelers in cities that have lost service now must drive or take buses to larger airports. That adds time and stress to travel. St. Cloud lost air service at the end of 2009 after Delta eliminated flights on 34-seat turboprops. Now, passengers from the city of 66,000 have a 90-minute drive to the Minneapolis airport 65 miles to the southeast.

Roger Geraets, who works for an online education company based near St. Cloud, flies at least twice a month from Minneapolis. He used to connect from St. Cloud. Now he drives, leaving an extra half hour for bad traffic. There are other headaches. Parking at St. Cloud was free, but in Minneapolis it costs \$14 per day. And getting through airport security in Minneapolis takes longer.

Another city without service is Oxnard, 60 miles northwest of Los Angeles, which lost three daily turboprop flights operated on behalf of United. The airport's website advises travelers to catch a

bus to Los Angeles International Airport.

Atilla Taluy, a tax preparer who lives in Oxnard, ends up driving or taking the shuttle to Los Angeles. "In morning traffic, it becomes quite a burdensome trip," he says.

Pierre, S.D., will lose Delta flights to Minneapolis in mid-January. Pierre officials are waiting to find out whether those flights will be replaced or whether the city will be left with only Great Lakes Airlines flights to Denver. The Denver flights add almost 600 miles in the wrong direction for people who want to fly from South Dakota's capital to Washington, D.C.

"I don't know if they really care about (passengers) in the small markets," says Rick Steece, a consultant for the Centers for Disease Control who travels overseas from Pierre two to three times a year.

In the late 1990s, when jet fuel cost one-fourth of today's prices, the small jets and turboprops were a profitable way for airlines to connect people in small cities to the rest in the world. The flights attracted business travelers who tended to pay more for tickets.

Airlines loved the planes. Bombardier and Embraer sold more than 1,900 50-seat jets during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

"We all got carried away with it," says Glen W. Hauenstein, Delta's executive vice president for network planning, revenue management and marketing.

Then jet fuel prices soared. They're at \$3.16 per gallon today, up from 78 cents in 2000. That's changed the economics of small planes.

For airlines, it all comes down to spreading fuel costs among passengers. A Delta 50-seat CRJ-200 made by Bombardier takes 19 gallons of fuel to fly each passenger 500 miles. Fuel usage drops to just 7.5 gallons per passenger on Delta's 160-seat MD-90s over the same distance.

So while the bigger jet burns

more fuel overall, it's more efficient.

Delta is moving away from small jets more aggressively than other airlines. It will eliminate 121 50-seat jets from October 2008 through the end of next year. That will leave it with 324.

Lynchburg, Va., lost Delta's three daily flights on 50-seat jets earlier this year, although US Airways still flies similar jets there.

Airport manager Mark Courtney says Delta also served nearby Roanoke and Charlottesville, Va., each about 60 miles away, so it may have figured its Lynchburg customers will drive to those cities to catch a flight.

Lynchburg is the home of the 2,000 workers for French nuclear

services company Areva, and its largest international destination had been Paris by way of Delta's Atlanta hub, Courtney says.

Some Delta routes served by 50-seaters are getting bigger planes instead. Delta's Atlanta-Des Moines flights are on larger MD-88s, which seat 142, and it has shifted the mix toward larger planes between Atlanta and Birmingham, Ala., Nashville, and Savannah, Ga., too.

United Continental Holdings Inc. still has 354 50-seat jets. But that number is expected to shrink, said Greg Hart, the airline's senior vice president of network.

Continental's effort to get rid of its 37-seat planes shows how eager airlines are to quit flying

them. It has 30 of the jets under lease, some until 2018. Twenty-five are grounded. The rest are subleased for \$6 million less than Continental is paying for them.

American Eagle, which feeds traffic to its corporate sibling American Airlines, owns 39 of the same 37-seaters. But 17 of them were parked as of the end of last year. Parent company AMR Corp. had been trying to sell some of those planes in 2009 but couldn't get any buyers.

Many travelers won't miss the small jets.

One of them, Tony Diaz, is a technology support manager from Dallas. He was changing planes in Minneapolis on his way to Moline, Ill. The second leg was a small

Delta jet.

"The larger planes are definitely better to ride in," he said, glancing down at his larger-than-average frame.

There's still a market for larger jets, which allow airlines to spread out fuel costs.

Nearly all so-called regional jets sold between 2010 and 2019 are expected to have 51 seats or more — with the biggest category being jets with 76 to 130 seats, according to Forecast International.

"More of those are going to see the skies," said aviation consultant Mike Boyd. But those aluminum-skinned 50-seaters will be scrapped for parts. "They're on their way to the Budweiser display."

ASK THE EXPERTS

Assisted Living/Hospice

Q What are Palliative and Hospice care and when should someone choose this?

A. Palliative care is specialized medical care for people with serious illnesses. Palliative care seeks to prevent and relieve suffering and to enhance the patient's comfort and quality of life. It utilizes a team of care givers to provide physical, psychological, and spiritual care, a support system to help the individual live as actively as possible and a support system to sustain and rehabilitate the individual's family. Palliative care is appropriate for patients in all stages of a chronic disease, such as Cardiac, Pulmonary, Renal, or Neurologic, as well as cancer. It focuses on symptom relief rather than a curative approach.

Although Hospice care is also Palliative, the term Hospice generally applies to care administered in patients with a prognosis of six months or less to live. One of the main keys to success for patients in both palliative and Hospice care is a long enough length of stay. The longer a person receives care, the better the outcome for symptom management and personal and family coping. It is very important for a referral to occur in time for adequate services to be delivered. Talk openly with your physician/care professional about whether Palliative or Hospice care may be indicated for you or your family member.



Colette Broekemeier, RN
Autumn Winds Comfort
Care Administrator



605-689-0382

Yankton, SD

Family Medicine

Q Am I a candidate for allergy testing?

A. You may be a candidate for allergy testing if you have experienced any of the following symptoms more than twice per year. Cough, cold, congestion, difficulty breathing, headache, wheezing, runny nose, sore throat, itchy/irritated eyes, sinus pain, ear pain, unexplained fatigue, skin irritation, or sneezing or if you have ever been diagnosed with asthma or bronchitis.

An allergy is an over reaction of the immune system to a stimulus of some type. There are many items in the environment that could cause your allergies. They fall into four general categories: 1.) Animal dander — from dogs, cats and cockroaches 2.) Mold and mildew 3.) Dust mites 4.) Pollen — from trees, grass and weeds.

Allergy testing with results available within just 15 minutes is now available at Lewis & Clark Family Medicine. Based on the results, allergy drops placed directly under the tongue are ordered as immunotherapy.

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Jeffrey Johnson,
M.D.



Brandi Pravacek, CNP
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Ear, Nose & Throat

Q Can a hearing aid really be invisible?

A. Yes, there are currently two options that could be considered invisible. However, I believe the gains in concealment are not worth the losses in comfort and performance. One of these devices is custom fit to your ear canal and is removable. This device offers state of the art technology and performance, but even the manufacturer concedes significant issues with fit and repair due to the deep insertion. The other device is a non custom device that is worn over extended periods of time. This device is subject to the same fit and repair issues due to its deep placement, but is using 20 year old circuitry with limited flexibility. Both devices are extremely expensive. So even though there are devices you can call invisible it is my opinion they do not compete at all with other styles of hearing aids that offer lower cost, great cosmetics and excellent performance.



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Yankton Ear,
Nose & Throat

Podiatry

Q What can I do for arthritis in my ankles and feet?

A. There are more than 100 different types of arthritis, including gout and rheumatoid arthritis. The most common forms to affect the foot & ankle is post-traumatic and osteoarthritis, especially in the big toe, ankle and midfoot joints.

Seeking treatment early can improve the odds of preventing irreversible joint damage. For many patients with early-stage foot or ankle arthritis, changes in shoes or advanced custom orthotics can make a huge difference. While there is no fountain of youth for arthritis, there are more medical options available than ever before.

Big Toes
Baby Boomers are most likely to develop osteoarthritis in their big toe joint. During walking, the big toe absorbs forces equal to nearly twice a person's body weight. It plays an important role in forcing and standing. Some boomers start to develop big toe stiffness, a condition called hallux limitus, in their forties.

Better surgical procedures now offer improved pain relief and joint movement to Boomers with early stage arthritis at the big toe. Patients with advanced and severe arthritis may need to have the joint fused or replaced. But stronger screws and hardware are helping fusions last longer while slashing recovery times. A new generation of big toe joint replacements shows promise.

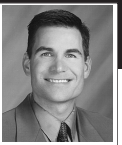
Ankles
Ankles are another prime spot for arthritis. Ankles are more likely to develop post-traumatic arthritis than osteoarthritis. For many Baby Boomers, the trauma was an ankle fracture or a bad sprain that may have happened in their teens or twenties. Innovative new surgical techniques allow foot and ankle surgeons to transplant small plugs of cartilage from one part of the ankle to another in some patients, slowing joint deterioration.

Ankle replacements are becoming more popular, and better ankle replacement implants are now available. Sometimes the ankle becomes too arthritic to resolve the pain without surgery. The only option used to be a fusion. Now, with advancements in implant technology, the ankle can be replaced just like they do for a shoulder, knee, or hip.

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Foot and Ankle Clinic



Terence Pedersen,
D.P.M.



Scott Torness,
D.P.M.

Urological

Q Did you know?



Dr. Joseph Boudreau
MD, F.R.C.S.

A. Men may have a higher risk of prostate cancer if they eat a lot of red meat and "processed" meats. They may also have a more advanced stage of their cancer when it is first detected. Does this mean one should not eat red meat? No, just avoid "processed" meats and cut the fat off your steak. Eat more fish such as salmon which is high in Omega 3 fatty acids.

Diets high in sodium (salt) and if you drink a lot of diet sodas are associated with a higher risk of kidney damage by reducing the kidneys ability to filter the blood. Even 2 or more cans per day have been shown to reduce the kidney's ability to filter the blood. Sodas sweetened with regular sugar, juices, and iced tea were not associated with any decrease in kidney function.

Yankton Urological Surgery, Prof., L.L.C. 2009 Locust, Yankton • 689-1100

Chiropractic

Q What is chiropractic about?



Sheila Fitzgerald,
DC

A. Chiropractic care is a great choice for many different types of problems and especially wellness. It is a personalized service of professionals who take time to understand the patient's history and problem. It continues to rank high in patient satisfaction rates. Historically, it has great benefits in a multitude of conditions. Chiropractic has withstood the controversy in health care and wellness. And, over the past several years, research has proven the effectiveness of chiropractic care in various conditions of pain and pain management. With increased demand by their patients, it has been made more accessible to the public. If you are considering chiropractic, please visit us and use our resources available on our website at firstchiropracticcenter.com.

Have a safe and healthy Christmas season!



2507 Fox Run Parkway,
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Fitness/Health

Q Is it ok to continue my workout outdoors once it starts getting colder?



Angie O'Connor
Clinical Exercise
Specialist

A. Working out outside in the winter can be safe if you take the right precautions. Layering your clothing is the first trick. Moisture is a good conductor of heat so if the first layer of your clothing gets and remains sweaty you may notice it is more difficult to stay warm. Your first layer of clothing should not be cotton but a wicking material that keeps the layer touching your skin dry. Your second layer should be a warming material like fleece and the outer layer something breathable but waterproof. A hat is also critical as you can lose a significant amount of heat from your head. Wear gloves and don't forget a scarf or face mask to help heat the air before you breathe it in. If the temperatures are below zero, the wind chill is extreme or if it is slippery you may want to consider exercising indoors to be safe. Remember to always tell someone, if you are headed out into the cold, where you are going and when you will be back. Don't forget...it is always just the right temperature at Avera Sacred Heart Wellness Center!



501 Summit • 665-9006 Sacred Heart Wellness Center

Pharmacy/Nutrition

Q Is there harm in taking excessive amounts of over the counter (OTC) medicines?



Leah Rempher
Pharm. D.

A. The flashy marketing colors and easy accessibility to OTC products do not mean they are always safe. If taken outside the recommended guidelines, all drugs including OTC products have the potential to cause serious adverse effects.

For example, throughout the country in many local newspapers, there most likely are articles related to teenage deaths associated with overdosing on OTC products containing the particular cough and cold ingredient dextromethorphan. At normal dosages, dextromethorphan acts to relieve coughing from the common cold or flu. However, when used recreationally at high doses, it may cause unsteadiness, seeing things or hearing voices that do not exist, difficulty in breathing, or even a coma. Although some in the present culture believe high doses of dextromethorphan are safer than other known abused drugs, dextromethorphan is also dangerous and can cause detrimental effects. The high risk of abuse potential due to low cost and purchasing capabilities has lead many pharmacies to place dextromethorphan and other similar products behind the counter to help monitor purchasing patterns.

Within family and friend circles, people should observe the behavior of loved ones to understand if medication abuse is happening and talk to them if there are suspicions. Following the indicated dosages on OTC medicines, reading the labels of all current OTC products, and consulting a pharmacist with questions can also decrease the potential of adverse effects.



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