

Airlines pack planes to offset fuel costs

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Cabin crowding is the latest scourge of the skies as airlines book themselves almost solid to beat high fuel prices and fewer first-class tickets. Jammed airplanes mean more elbowing, lines for bathrooms, packed overhead bins, and less flexibility to book last-minute flights or accommodate travelers whose flights are delayed, the Washington Post said. U.S. Bureau of Transportation data show airplanes this year were 81 percent full, compared to 62 percent full in 1990, the Post said. Airlines have increased their "load factors" to offset high fuel costs and lulls in more-pricey business travel. United Airlines has cut domestic flights by 5 percent this year to increase passenger density. "Frankly, this is the only economic way we can continue to provide low fares," John Tague, a vice president at United Airlines, told the Post.

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