

FAA predicts more flight delays in 2007

by UPI

HERNDON, Va. - The Federal Aviation Administration says increased air travel combined with severe weather is causing more U.S. flight delays.

There were almost 500,000 delays of 15 minutes or more last year and 142,000 delays for the first four months of 2007, The New York Times said Wednesday.

FAA Administrator Marion Blakey said forecasters are predicting more hurricanes and severe tropical storms in 2007 compared to last year, which could mean more delays.

The FAA is trying new software that pinpoints areas of severe weather and searches flight plans to see which ones intended to go through that spot. Then controllers give pilots a choice of accepting a departure delay or a detour.

Related software will identify ways to keep runways at capacity by allowing planes to use landing slots left open by planes delayed by weather in other locations.

The newspaper said aviation officials also are working with the Defense Department, NASA and Homeland Security to develop a navigation system based on Global Positioning System technology.

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