Weather, COVID-19 double-whammy for airlines

BY DAVID HURST

Air travelers, the new year brings many canceled flights.

New year brings many more canceled flights

Maryland Heights, Mo. — The new year begins with the whole wedding dress affair — the one involving silk and design sketches and a sewing machine — based on a companion. It may also have something to do with the federal government, or whoever that deep well of bureaucracy decided the U.S. Army should issue new uniforms, the pits and grins of the World War II era to honor that part of America’s heritage.

Frankly, the whirlwind of thread and fabric in a three-month time span was likely as much Cicely Wardyn’s childhood as anything, growing up on a farm near Lexington where she learned to sew in 4-H, wrestling with a sewing machine at her aunt’s house.

That, and the fact that the assistant director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture who spent a few years in Washington where she learned to sew in 4-H, wrestling with a sewing machine at her aunt’s house.

A handsewn dress, a new Army uniform and a beautiful Nebraska wedding

Daniel and Cindy Wardyn on their wedding day. The groom — a lieutenant in the Army reserves — wore a newly issued uniform that harkened back to the Greatest Generation and the bride wore a silk gown reminiscent of the sleek simplicity of women’s fashion in the 1940s. One she sewed herself despite not sewing much since high school.

Wintry weather made Chicago the worst place in the world, according to tracking service FlightAware. That is the highest single-day U.S. bill yet since just before Christmas, when airlines began blaming staffing shortages on increasing COVID-19 infections among crews. More than 32,000 U.S. flights have been canceled since Dec. 24.

Saturday’s disruptions weren’t just in the Windy City, however. Wintry weather made Chicago — where forecasts called for 9 inches of snow — the worst place in the country for travelers. More than 400 flights were canceled at O’Hare Airport and more than 250 at Midway Airport.

Southwest Airlines suspended operations at both Chicago airports because of the forecast, according to an airline spokeswoman. She said Southwest knows from years of operating at Midway that high winds and blowing snow make it hard to get planes back in the air quickly.

In Michigan, heavy snow was expected to start falling Saturday night, with as much as 7 inches expected along the Interstate 75 corridor in west Michigan and 2 to 5 inches anticipated in the southeastern part of the state. And the northwestern Indiana was expected to see between 3 to 6 inches of snow.

Southwest canceled more than 410 flights nationwide, or 19% of its schedule, on Saturday. American Airlines and Delta Air Lines scrapped more than 200 flights again, and United Airlines canceled more than 150.

According to the Federal Aviation Administration, the weather caused more than 4,000 flights to be scrubbed at Midway Airport. More than 12,000 flights have been canceled since Dec. 24. That is the highest single-day U.S. bill yet since just before Christmas, when airlines began blaming staffing shortages on increasing COVID-19 infections among crews. More than 32,000 U.S. flights have been canceled since Dec. 24.

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Additionally, the billions of dollars in federal pandemic recovery funding that airlines were hoping to secure this year are not likely.

Although distribution of the infrastructure funding is essentially managed by the Nebraska Department of Transportation, a legislative effort to direct some of that funding to accelerated completion of the state’s expressway system is not likely.

Contact David Horn with questions or comments.