US airlines' daily cancellations top 2,000



Travelers wait at a video board at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport on Sunday in Detroit. RYAN SUN/AP PHOTO

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WASHINGTON — U.S. airlines canceled more than 2,100 flights on Sunday as Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy warned that air traffic across the nation could "slow to a trickle" if the federal government shutdown lingers into the busy Thanksgiving travel holiday season.

The slowdown at 40 of the nation's busiest airports is now in its third day and beginning to cause more widespread disruptions. The FAA last week ordered flight cuts at the nation's busiest airports as some air traffic controllers, who have gone unpaid for nearly a month, have stopped showing up for work.

In addition, some 7,000 flight delays were reported on Sunday alone, according to FlightAware, a website that tracks air travel disruptions. More than 1,000 flights were canceled Friday, and more than 1,500 on Saturday.

The FAA reductions started Friday at 4% and will increase to 10% by Nov. 14. They are in effect from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. local time and will impact all commercial airlines.

Hartsfield–Jackson International Airport in Atlanta had the most cancellations Sunday, with more than 570, followed by Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey, with at least 265. In Georgia, weather could also be a factor, with the National Weather Service office in Atlanta warning of widespread freezing conditions through Tuesday.

The FAA said staffing shortages at Newark and LaGuardia Airport in New York were leading to average departure delays of about 75 minutes.

Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport in Michigan was mostly empty Sunday morning, with minimal wait times at security checkpoints as delays and cancellations filled the departures and arrivals boards.

Earlier Sunday, Duffy warned that U.S. air traffic could decline significantly if the shutdown persists. He said additional flight cuts — perhaps up to 20% — might be needed, particularly after controllers receive no pay for a second straight pay period.