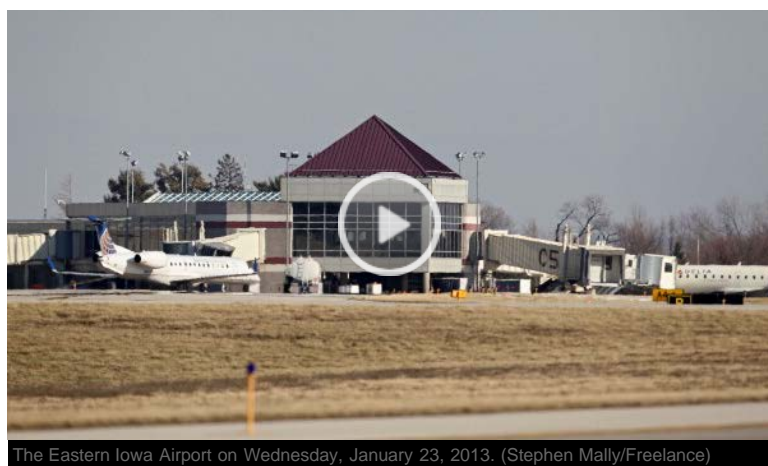


FIRST ALERT 37°
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Cedar Rapids Airport Traffic Nearing the One Million Mark Again

By Dave Franzman, Reporter



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Story Created: Jan 28, 2013 at 4:20 PM CST
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CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa — The passenger numbers are looking very good at The Eastern Iowa Airport. Final figures for calendar year 2012 show nearly all the passengers lost over the years to either airline cutbacks or a poor economy have resumed flying in and out of Cedar Rapids.

The total number of airlines passengers in Cedar Rapids hit 985,141 in 2012. That's the biggest number since 2008 and airport officials are fairly confident of passing the million passenger mark this year. The passenger increase in 2012 was 11.8%.

Airport officials said the addition of a low-cost airline, Frontier, last year made fares more competitive. So Cedar Rapids is getting some of the travelers who used to drive elsewhere to hop on a plane.

Monday wasn't the day to really get a good feel for the higher passenger numbers. With dense fog, only a few flights made it in or out early in the day. But some travelers have noticed more company in the terminal in 2012.

Michael Fritts, who drove from Waterloo to catch a flight, said "I think you notice it's busier pulling into the parking lot. It's tougher to find a spot and when you get inside there is more traffic."

Tim Bradshaw, director of The Eastern Iowa Airport, predicted passenger traffic will exceed 1 million a year in 2013. But he's also afraid it will be tough to beat the record set in 2007 before the national economic problems. The number that year was just more than 1 million, 60-thousand. Bradshaw said the problem with exceeding that is airlines fly smaller planes these days compared to years past and airlines aren't as eager to add flights quickly.

"Most people flying today recognize flights are full — there's not a lot of additional seats out there. If we could get airlines to add additional flights, there could be a possibility (of beating the record)," he said.

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The higher passenger numbers at the airport didn't go unnoticed by airport vendors either. Jeff Ries, with SSP America, the main airport vendor, said "we've seen our business go up maybe 20 percent in just about three years."

Bradshaw said The Eastern Iowa Airport wants to hit the 1 million passenger total for more than just bragging rights. He said it's a number that tends to get more attention from airlines when the airport calls about adding service. And it also puts the airport in a new category when it comes to accessing federal grants for airport improvements.

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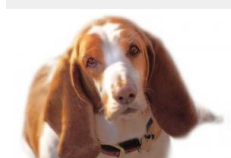
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