



Misinterpreting the Stick Shaker?

I read the article “Startled and Confused” (ASW, 3/10, p. 20) regarding the crash of a Colgan Air Bombardier Q400 on approach to Buffalo Niagara (New York, U.S.) International Airport and came to a conclusion that may explain the flight crew’s inappropriate response to the stick shaker. I believe that the crew was so involved with the discussion of the effects of the icing conditions that they failed to recognize their deteriorating airspeed. Consequently, when the stick shaker activated while the flaps were traveling between the 10- and 15-degree selection, the crew misinterpreted the stick shaker as a tailplane stall.

Application of power and a rigorous pull force on the control column would be an appropriate response to a tailplane stall. Retracting the flaps to the previous setting is also an appropriate response to a tailplane stall. The SIC may have retracted the flaps in response to a non-verbal cue from the PIC, or she may have perceived this action as a last-ditch chance to control the aircraft in response to previous training. We will never know, but I would recommend that the NTSB review Colgan Air’s training syllabus regarding the recognition and response to a tailplane stall.

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Pilots’ Last Words

I applaud the work done by Flight Safety Foundation, and usually learn something new with each issue of *AeroSafety*

World. I also share the Foundation’s often-expressed concern regarding the trend toward criminalizing aviation accidents and incidents, and worry that this may start appearing in the U.S. or Canada.

But I have a complaint regarding behavior I’d hoped the Foundation would not exhibit: publishing the dying words of crewmembers, where they have no direct relevance. Such happened with the accident report excerpts chosen for inclusion in the ASW report on the Colgan Flight 3407 accident.

There was no need to include the last words of the captain, nor that the first officer could be heard screaming, as the last sounds on the CVR. I accept it is relevant to report that the crew was aware they could not save the situation. And I acknowledge that this information *might* be germane to the accident report. But I do not accept that ASW, or any other journal, has a moral or ethical responsibility to publish what, to the families and close friends of these pilots, would be incredibly painful reminders of their loss.

Such information does nothing to enhance your reporting of the facts, or lessons learned from such events. To me it is purely sensationalism and I abhor it.

I urge you to discuss this amongst your editorial steering group, and decide to take out the sensation and insult to the bereaved. Thank you for considering my concern.

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System Safety Engineer,
Accident Investigator, MD-11 pilot

Head Count

Concerning the item about a near-collision between a Boeing 767 and a McDonnell Douglas MD-82 at Chicago (ASW, 4/10, p. 57): If the crew numbers for the 767 are correct — five — that flight was surely illegal. The five would include the two pilots, making three cabin staff — on a trans-Atlantic 767 flight?

Norman Hogwood
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The editor replies: *The reader is correct. There were 12 crewmembers aboard the 767.*



AeroSafety World encourages comments from readers, and will assume that letters and e-mails are meant for publication unless otherwise stated. Correspondence is subject to editing for length and clarity.

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