

Accessible Oxygen

Oxygen mask hoses in airliner cockpits should be made longer to ensure that pilots have full access to emergency equipment located in the cockpit, the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) says.

In a safety recommendation letter to the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the NTSB cited the circumstances surrounding the May 16, 2010, fire in the windshield heat terminal connection in the cockpit of a United Airlines Boeing 757-200 during a flight from New York to Los Angeles. The flight crew diverted to Washington Dulles International Airport in Chantilly, Virginia. None of the 112 people in the airplane was injured.

The NTSB said that the probable cause was the ignition of a power terminal on the captain's windshield because of a loose electrical connection. The captain told NTSB accident investigators that he had donned his oxygen mask and smoke goggles because of the acrid odor in the cockpit; soon afterward, he left his seat "because the flames were in front of him and he needed to immediately reach the fire extinguisher" on the back wall of the cockpit, the NTSB said.

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"The captain stated that, as he moved toward the fire extinguisher, his oxygen mask and smoke goggles were 'torn off' because he had reached the end of the hose attached to the oxygen mask," the NTSB said.

He put the mask and goggles back on, discharged the fire extinguisher and moved toward the cockpit door to pick up a second fire extinguisher from a flight attendant. As he did, the mask and goggles came off again.

The NTSB said that it "is concerned that the length of the hose attached to the captain's oxygen mask was insufficient to allow him access to needed emergency equipment located in the cockpit without having the mask inadvertently removed from his face. As a result, the captain was needlessly exposed to smoke and fumes."

The Air Line Pilots Association, International (ALPA) had made a similar suggestion to the FAA in 2007. ALPA noted that the response from the FAA Seattle Aircraft Certification Office was that oxygen masks were intended primarily for use during a decompression, not while fighting an in-flight fire.

The NTSB recognized the need for portable breathing equipment in fighting a cabin fire but added that it might be "of limited use while fighting an in-cockpit fire when the oxygen masks are available and likely already donned."

In its safety recommendation letter, the NTSB also called on the FAA to "provide clear guidance ... concerning the type of breathing equipment to wear when combating a cockpit fire" — that is, whether oxygen masks or portable protective breathing equipment would be preferred.

A third recommendation asked the FAA to amend advisory circulars to specify that cockpit fire extinguishers must be within the reach of at least one flight crewmember while oxygen masks are in use.

Tiger Suspension Ends

Tiger Airways Australia has resumed operations after a suspension of more than one month by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority of Australia (CASA), which said it would continue monitoring the airline's operations.

CASA suspended Tiger Airways' operations July 2, citing a "serious and imminent risk to air safety," and lifted the suspension Aug. 10, with the condition that Tiger Airways comply with CASA requirements for pilot training, proficiency, rostering and fatigue management.

Other conditions involved the currency and revision of operations manuals, appointment of personnel to key positions and amendments to the airline's safety management system.

"Tiger Airways Australia was required to demonstrate it had complied with the necessary safety requirements before it was permitted to resume operations," CASA said.

CASA Director of Aviation Safety John McCormick said that Tiger Airways had shown that it could comply



Jimmy Harris/Wikimedia

with the conditions for its air operator's certificate and "meet the necessary safety requirements."

Fuel Findings

The practice of some low-cost carriers of consistently avoiding the carriage of extra fuel could create situations that limit a captain's decision-making options and lead to the impression among pilots that the use of marginal fuel is normal, the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) says.



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The organization said its survey of 132 airline pilots about their employers' fuel-planning policies found that 40 percent of the pilots wanted more authority in determining how much fuel to load for specific flights.

About one-third of the respondents said that they were aware of landings by their company's pilots with fuel that amounted to less than the "final reserve."

"Landing with astonishingly small amounts of fuel occurs on long-range flights, as well as on short-haul flights," IFALPA said in a briefing leaflet on its survey. Despite such "extreme examples," the leaflet said, "overwhelmingly, the practice of good airmanship is widespread."

The leaflet noted "tremendous differences" in operators' policies and speculated that a number of fuel incidents might go unreported, however.

New Rules

New regulations are in effect throughout Europe for the licensing and medical certification of air traffic controllers.

The regulations, developed by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), establish uniform requirements for controllers and require continent-wide recognition of controller licenses, ratings, language endorsements and medical certificates.

Controllers with licenses issued in accordance with the new regulations will be qualified to work in all EASA member states.

EASA Executive Director Patrick Goudou said that the implementation of a single set of regulations for controller licensing "will make an important contribution to the achievement of a high and uniform level of safety across Europe."

New Warnings on Fuel Additives

The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), citing the 2009 crash of a Pilatus PC-12/45 that killed the pilot and all 13 passengers, is asking regulators to require more stringent warnings to pilots about the need for fuel additives, including fuel system icing inhibitors (p. 14).

Recommendations to the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) call for the two regulators to amend certification requirements for aircraft that require fuel system icing inhibitors and other fuel additives "so that those limitations are highlighted by a warning in the limitations section of the airplane flight manual." Other recommendations would apply that requirement to aircraft that already are in service.

The NTSB also called on the regulators to require that the same warnings be placed on a fuel filler placard.

An additional recommendation, issued only to the FAA, called on the agency to "issue guidance on fuel system icing prevention that includes pilot precautions and procedures to avoid fuel system icing problems aboard turbine engine-powered aircraft and describes the possible consequences of failing to use a fuel system icing inhibitor, if required by the airplane flight manual, especially during operations at high altitudes and in cold temperatures."

The airplane had been en route from Oroville, California, U.S., to Bozeman, Montana, when the pilot diverted to Butte, Montana. The airplane crashed west of Runway 33 in Butte.

In related action, the accident prompted the FAA to publish a proposed clarification of its seat belt and seating requirements for U.S. Federal Aviation Regulations Part 91 general aviation aircraft to specify that a seat belt and/or seat may be used by more than one person only if the seat belt is approved for such use, the "structural strength requirements for the seat are not exceeded" and the seat usage is in compliance with the airplane flight manual.

The accident airplane's 13 passengers — six adults and seven children — shared nine seats, and the NTSB said that evidence indicated that four of the children were either unrestrained or improperly restrained.

Sbscottw/Wikipedia



Battery Policy Called Unacceptable

The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) has denounced policies that continue to exempt air cargo shipments of lithium batteries from most provisions regulating the handling of dangerous goods.

The batteries have been linked to more than 40 reported incidents of "smoke, fire, extreme heat or explosion in air transport," IFALPA said.

There are two major types of lithium batteries: lithium ion batteries, which usually are rechargeable and used in such devices as laptop computers, cell phones and portable music players; and lithium metal batteries, non-rechargeable batteries used in cameras, flashlights and automatic external defibrillators.

Testing has shown that a fire involving lithium ion batteries "will easily propagate through the entire

shipment of batteries." Other tests have determined that the Halon fire suppression systems used in many aircraft cargo holds are unable to control a lithium metal battery fire, IFALPA said.

IFALPA noted that when lithium batteries are shipped as air cargo, they are not subject to many of the technical instructions developed by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for dangerous goods shipments, including requirements for a dangerous goods label to be placed on the package. The ICAO instructions also include a call for the pilot-in-command to be informed of the presence of the battery shipment in the aircraft and for shippers to receive training in dangerous goods regulations.

The instructions should be revised, IFALPA said, "to protect passengers, flight crew and the aircraft from the

risk of a fire caused or made worse by the shipment of lithium batteries as cargo."



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Antonov An-12s Grounded

Rostransnadzor, the Russian agency supervising transportation, has suspended flights by the 12 Antonov An-12 airplanes operated by six airlines within the Russian Federation.



Juergen Lehle/Wikimedia

The agency said the suspension would remain in effect until the airlines reduce the risks of operating the An-12s through actions taken in accordance with safety management systems.

The suspension followed the Aug. 9 fatal crash of an Avis-Amur An-12 — described as the oldest airplane in the Russian commercial fleet — as the crew attempted to return to Magadan, Russia, because of a fuel leak and an engine fire. All 11 people in the airplane for the cargo flight were killed and the airplane was destroyed in the crash.

In Other News ...

The International Civil Aviation Organization has signed an agreement with the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations to conduct a joint training program on the transportation of **dangerous goods** by air. ... **Deborah A.P. Hersman** has been sworn in for a second term as chairman of the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board. ... The Civil Aviation Safety Authority of Australia has updated its guidelines for aviation operations during **volcanic ash** events. The guidance, based on updated material from the International Civil Aviation Organization, says aircraft should not operate in areas of medium or high ash contamination but operations may be permitted in areas of low-level contamination, as long as a safety risk assessment is conducted first.

Compiled and edited by Linda Werfelman.