



## Ramp Workers Contributed to Evacuation After Collision

Congratulations on placing *AeroSafety World* online for the entire world to read, a prodigious step forward in the distribution of safety knowledge.

Mark Lacagnina's article titled "No Brakes, No Steering" (*ASW*, 7/07, p. 33) illuminated the human factors cause of this accident but unfortunately stopped short of telling the entire story.

Even before the aircraft rescue and fire fighting crew arrived, Northwest Airlines personnel (mechanics) lodged a tug against the DC-9's nose and attempted to rescue the pilots, who were trapped in the cockpit, through a cockpit window. Likewise, they tried to enter the fuselage through the forward galley door to effect a rescue. Additional NWA personnel dropped the rear airstair (which can only be deployed from the ground), and passengers were calmly directed across the ramp to safety.

Later in the event, the decision was made to evacuate the A319 due to the continuing leaking of jet fuel from the A319's ruptured wing, causing concern by ARFF that the fuel would find an ignition source. The crew deployed the forward slide, and NWA ground personnel caught the passengers as they evacuated and guided them to safety in the terminal building.

It is important to remember that, in this event, the DC-9 pilots were trapped, injured and out of the game. The A319 pilots had no idea what had happened to them. There were no particular "leaders" of the evacuation on the ground, rather a group of trained individuals who

instinctively took action to ensure the safety of the passengers.

In no way do I mean to demean the training or ability of ARFF personnel. Rather, the point is that, in the development of rescue plans, the airline personnel who routinely handle these various aircraft are much quicker to react. They should be an integral part of any airport disaster/rescue plan. And the ramp personnel in this accident should receive a "tip of the hat" for their actions.

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## Controllers Have a Part to Play in ATC Modernization

I would like to respond to the editorial "Poisonous" (*ASW*, 7/07, p. 5), which partially described the angst that exists between air traffic controllers and the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration. In your editorial, you claimed that the two sides are talking past each other and that the future of the air traffic control system is at stake unless the two sides start communicating better. We agree completely, as does the Government Accountability Office, which told Congress in May that the FAA, by failing to involve controllers in technology development, incurs costly reworks and delays. The GAO further reported that, to its dismay, no current controllers or technicians are involved at the more detailed group planning levels for the next generation air traffic system.

Nobody wants to modernize the U.S. air traffic control system more than this nation's air traffic controllers. We have

long been proud to lend our expertise to ensure that the FAA's modernization efforts are safe and effective. From 1997 to 2002, controllers worked closely with the FAA, conducting tests, developing equipment and methods, and then successfully implementing new equipment and procedures.

However, current FAA leadership has not been as open to accepting National Air Traffic Controllers Association assistance. Our technical experts have been sent home, and the FAA has refused our requests to be involved in the modernization. Even with this setback, controllers continue to be eager to help design and implement NextGen.

You also mentioned our nearly daily barrage of press releases alleging one safety problem after another. In fact, NATCA issued 21 press releases total throughout May, June and July, some of which detailed serious safety issues concerning the ATC system. As those with a front-row seat on how safely the system is operating daily, we feel it is our civic and moral responsibility to blow the whistle on all important safety issues in order to protect the flying public. It would not do anybody any good if we stood back and said nothing at all.

The U.S. air traffic system is the best in the world. Controllers are hard at work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to ensure that your loved ones arrive safely at their destinations.

Patrick Forrey  
National Air Traffic Controllers Association