

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Forwarded to:

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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-85-105 through -107

The National Transportation Safety Board has had a long standing concern that some passengers onboard air carrier airplanes have contributed to their own injuries or deaths because they were not prepared to respond appropriately to emergencies. Safety Board accident reports, special studies, and related safety recommendations have shown that past and present means of conveying information on the use of safety equipment are not entirely effective. The preparation of passengers for emergencies depends mainly on flight attendant oral briefings and demonstrations before takeoff, the information contained on the printed briefing cards, videotaped safety briefings, and other instructions, sometimes given under the duress of the emergency itself.

Beginning in 1976, in testimony before subcommittees of the U. S. House of Representatives, the Safety Board has described the need for passengers to be more mindful of emergency procedures, as well as the need to bring home to passengers the message that they are responsible for their own survival if the cabin crewmembers are unable to assist during an evacuation or other emergency. Similar testimony also has been presented by the FAA, the airlines, airline employee associations, and industry experts on passenger safety briefings. In spite of experience in accidents, Safety Board recommendations, testimony before the Congress, and privately developed protocols to test and develop improvements in briefing methods, advances have been very limited. The Safety Board's belief that the continued incidence of passenger education problems in accidents is of serious concern has led to this safety study. As an outgrowth, a full presentation of the Safety Board's findings is set out in the recent Board Safety Study Airline Passenger Safety Education: A Review of Methods Used to Present Safety Information. 1/

As part of this study, a survey was conducted of airlines, employee associations, and passenger groups to elicit their suggestions on ways to improve passenger acceptance of safety information briefings as well as ways to improve the manner of presentation and content of the information.

1/ For more detailed information read Safety Study--"Airline Passenger Safety Education: A Review of Methods Used to Present Safety Information" (NTSB/SS-85/04).

Several suggestions were made for improving passenger briefings. These included the following: advise passengers to count the number of seat rows between exits; design universal or more explicit briefing cards; provide videotaped safety briefings in the boarding lounges or onboard the airplane; conduct a pre-landing briefing; place greater emphasis on the location and operation of exits and overwater equipment; use passengers on an impromptu basis during the briefing to hold the attention of passengers; and conduct periodic surveys to determine if passengers adequately understand briefings. The National Transportation Safety Board believes that there are ways to provide more than rudimentary knowledge of the safety equipment onboard air carrier airplanes to frequent flyers as well as first-time air travellers. For instance, airlines could provide video messages and "hands on" displays of life preservers, oxygen masks, and seatbelts in terminal waiting areas and encourage passengers to operate these devices through marketing techniques. Also, the Department of Transportation, airlines, and the National Advertising Council could provide media public service announcements aimed at informing the public of airplane safety features.

The International Air Transport Association, the Airline Pilots Association, and others agree that pre-landing safety briefings should be given to airline passengers. The Safety Board concurs and believes further that these briefings should be given irrespective of the length of the flight. At the present time flight attendant pre-landing announcements request that passengers bring their seatbacks up, lock tray tables, stow loose articles, and fasten their seatbelts. The Safety Board believes that passengers need to be reminded of other safety features before landing, especially on flights that may last for several hours and extend through several time changes, resulting in passengers becoming lethargic or otherwise less alert than when they first boarded the airplane. The Safety Board believes that an unreasonable burden would not be placed upon flight attendants to make a pre-landing announcement early in the descent for landing with the following information: (1) passengers note the exit nearest to them and alternate exits, (2) the location and operation of flotation devices if the approach is to be over water, and (3) a request that passengers refer to their safety cards for instructions on the exit routes and the operation of exits.

The Safety Board believes that airlines could encourage their employees when they travel as passengers to be attentive to flight attendant oral briefings and demonstrations, to read the safety cards, and when applicable, to be attentive to video briefings. These actions could provide an example and create a form of peer pressure for other passengers to avail themselves of the safety information provided. Further, air carriers could provide familiarization of safety equipment to their non-flying employees and to the families of all employees. Airline employee associations could publish safety information in their periodicals and discuss passenger safety information during membership meetings. The Safety Board believes that several approaches can be taken by the airlines, employee associations, and the business and professional communities to disseminate airplane safety information to frequent and first-time air travellers.

Safety recommendations to the Federal Aviation Administration have resulted in some improvements in safety information provided to airline passengers. However, a 1983 safety recommendation that the FAA convene a government-industry task force to fully examine safety briefings with the view to improving passenger attention to the briefings and the content of the briefings themselves has not been acted upon to the satisfaction of the Safety Board.

As a result of its Safety Study on Passenger Safety Education, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Regional Airlines Association:

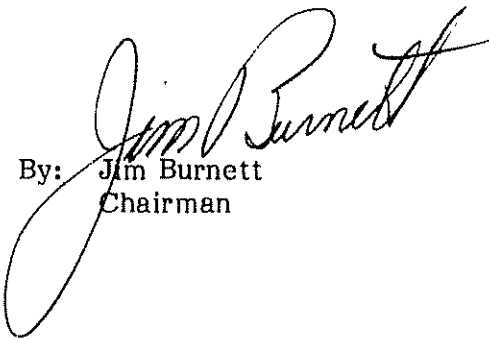
Encourage all employees and their families, when flying as passengers for personal or business reasons, to set an example of attentiveness to oral briefings and demonstrations, and videotaped safety briefings and of reading the safety cards. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-85-105)

Include articles in inflight magazines which provide additional and more detailed safety information for passengers. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-85-106)

Establish a standing committee within your organization to review passenger safety briefing methods and to work closely with the FAA in improving the content and presentation of passenger safety information. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-85-107)

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility ". . . to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations and would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendations in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendations A-85-105 through 107 in your reply.

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and BURSLEY, Member, concurred in these recommendations.

By: 
Jim Burnett
Chairman