

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: September 11, 1974

Forwarded to:

Honorable Alexander P. Butterfield
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-74-62 thru 64

On December 15, 1973, an Aircraft Pool Leasing Corporation Super Constellation L-1049H, operating as a cargo carrier, crashed into a residential area shortly after taking off from Miami International Airport, Miami, Florida. It was a nonscheduled cargo flight to Caracas, Venezuela, which was originally planned to operate under the provisions of 14 CFR 91D.

The National Transportation Safety Board's review of the flight engineer's medical records showed that from 1970 through 1973, three medical certificates were issued to him by an Aviation Medical Examiner (AME) in Miami, Florida. Although the certificate issued on November 16, 1973, was a First Class certificate, the application form indicates that the airman applied for a Second Class certificate. In addition, an applicant is required to take an electrocardiogram before he can be issued a First Class certificate. In this case, however, there is no record that an electrocardiogram was given.

The flight engineer's medical records also contain correspondence which indicates that he had tried to obtain a Second Class medical certificate in the Netherlands on December 3, 1971. In a letter to the FAA Aeromedical Certification Branch, dated December 16, 1971, the AME in the Netherlands stated that the applicant's hearing and vision were inadequate. Additionally, the AME indicated that, in his judgment, the applicant was not mentally fit and might have been under the influence of alcohol or drugs during his examination. Because of these findings, the AME had given the applicant a letter of denial.

In the same letter, the examining AME also stated that he suspected the man had illegally obtained a presigned certificate from his office. A completed Second Class certificate dated December 3, 1971, which bore the AME's signature, was found among the personal belongings of the flight engineer following the above accident.

After receiving the letter, a representative of the Aeromedical Certification Branch advised the AME in the Netherlands that the computer had been "flagged" for subsequent applications by this man and that they would do everything possible to attempt to locate him. According to Aeromedical Certification Branch personnel, there was no further correspondence relative to this matter in the man's medical file. Subsequent to the denial, however, the flight engineer was issued two medical certificates.

Our investigation also revealed that the flight engineer was an alcoholic. He had been enrolled in various rehabilitation programs, including one in which his condition was diagnosed by a physician as "severe chronic alcoholic," with "alcohol epilepsy." According to the medical records at the rehabilitation center, the flight engineer's convulsions began in 1966.

The toxicological analyses of the flight engineer's blood did not reveal basic drugs or alcohol. However, his blood did contain .58 mg. percent of meprobamate, a tranquilizer. FAA publication AC 91.11-1, "Guide to Drug Hazards in Aviation Medicine," states the following regarding the use of meprobamate: "Airman duties contraindicated for 24 hours after use; however, patients requiring tranquilizers are ordinarily excluded from duty."

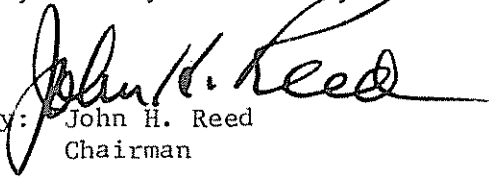
In applications for medical certificates by the flight engineer, he denied having or having had, the following: Unconsciousness for any reason, epilepsy or fits, nervous trouble of any sort, any drug or narcotic habit, or an excessive drinking habit. There presently are no effective means to confirm the existence of such ailments which are disqualifying by 14 CFR 67A.

Although none of these findings have been directly related to the cause of the accident on December 15, 1973, deficiencies in the medical certification and surveillance process allowed a medically disqualified crewmember to participate in the conduct of the flight.

To prevent recurrence of the irregularities and deficiencies identified herein, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

1. Establish a system for the processing of airmen's medical records which will more effectively identify persons who have previously been denied a medical certificate.
2. Provide in your current program more effective guidelines to AME's by which to identify subtle, disqualifying ailments, such as alcoholism and nervous conditions and conduct periodic seminars to emphasize the importance of such factors.
3. Issue a Medical Alert Bulletin (similar to your Flight Standards Maintenance/Operations Bulletins) to AME's and other FAA medical personnel, incorporating the essential elements of this case, to emphasize the need for thorough processing of medical certification records, safeguarding of medical forms, and cautioning of presigning medical certificates.

REED, Chairman, McADAMS, BURGESS, HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations. THAYER, Member, was absent, not voting.


By: John H. Reed
Chairman

THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.