

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 P.M., E.D.T., JUNE 9, 1976

(202) 426-8787

ISSUED: June 9, 1976

Forwarded to:

Honorable John L. McLucas
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-76-76

On August 7, 1975, Continental Air Lines Flight 426, a Boeing 727, crashed after takeoff from Stapleton International Airport, Denver, Colorado. The 134 persons aboard the aircraft survived; 15 persons were injured seriously. The aircraft was substantially damaged.

The National Transportation Safety Board's investigation of the accident disclosed that shortly after takeoff Continental 426 encountered severe wind shear which caused a degradation of aircraft performance. For the altitude and airspeed at which the shear was encountered, the performance degradation was serious enough to preclude recovery to level flight. The wind shear was generated by a thunderstorm which was located over the aircraft's departure path.

The hazards associated with the thunderstorm over the aircraft's departure path were not readily visible or apparent because the base of the thunderstorm was high above the ground, it was surrounded by other cumulonimbus clouds with high bases, and the prevailing visibility was excellent. Although the available wind information indicated that the surface winds were variable and gusty, and two pilots had reported updrafts and downdrafts and a shear line at about 200 feet above the runway, the flightcrew of Continental 426 used normal takeoff procedures which included a noise abatement climb profile. Moreover, Continental's Flight Manual provided for no alteration of takeoff procedures if the surface winds were variable and gusty, or if low-altitude wind shear or turbulence was believed to exist.

The Safety Board was unable to determine whether the use of different takeoff procedures, which could have altered the speed and altitude of the aircraft during the wind shear encountered, could have enabled Continental 426 to negotiate the reported wind shear.

Honorable John L. McLucas

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Accordingly, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration, in conjunction with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, pilot associations, the Aerospace Industries Association, and the Air Transport Association:

Evaluate all air carrier takeoff and climb procedures to determine whether different procedures can be developed and used that will better enable flightcrews to cope with known or suspected low-altitude wind shears. If different procedures are developed, they should be incorporated into the air carriers' flight manuals. (Class II - Priority Followup)
(A-76-76)

TODD, Chairman, McADAMS, HALEY, and HOGUE, Members concurred in the above recommendation. BURGESS, Member, dissented.

W. B. Todd, Jr.
By: Webster B. Todd, Jr.
Chairman

THIS RECOMMENDATION 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.