

March 6, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Severe Turbulence Encounter
AA123
February 27, 2019

The Captain was flying when the incident occurred. As the First Officer, I was the Pilot Monitoring. 20 minutes before descent, as I was returning to the cockpit from third period break in preparation for landing, I heard the Captain call the Purser informing him of possible 'light to moderate turbulence in the descent'. This caution had just been given to the Captain by HCF Center, the controlling ATC facility. The Captain advised the Purser to have all flight attendants begin stowing carts and take their seats. Approximately 15 minutes later, we began our descent from FL380. There was no convective activity in the area, just a few scattered decks of clouds at various altitudes so weather radar could not have offered any useful information concerning turbulence. The seat belt sign was on. Passing FL305, we encountered the most serious turbulence I have ever experienced in a 43-year flying career. After receiving a call from the cabin, we learned two of our least experienced flight attendants working in the rear of the cabin had been injured. Three medical doctors had responded helping stabilize one with an apparent back injury. We declared a medical emergency and were given priority handling all the way through the landing to the gate where the aircraft was met by paramedics who took over from the doctors. Both flight attendants were transported to a local hospital via ambulance.

It should be noted that the ATC cautionary transmission was the only information we had concerning possible turbulence in the descent. We had absolutely no updated WSI weather data at any time during the entire flight. This is the third time I had flown Nose #7AB in 9 days. On all three legs, the Wi-Fi system was never able to access the AAFlightdeck Wi-Fi signal at all. In my experience, on about half the 777-200 fleet, this Wi-Fi signal can be accessed in the cockpit giving reliable updated information, but even though it can usually be accessed on the other half, the signal in the cockpit is too weak to provide updated weather data. However, on this particular aircraft there was no cockpit Wi-Fi signal to access on three separate legs. I have generally found the signal to be unusable on the entire 777-300 fleet. This is a shame on long international flights when the data on our iPads can be over 8 hours old or longer.