

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Research and Engineering

Washington, DC 20594



DCA21FA174

MEDICAL

Specialist's Factual Report

November 1, 2022

A. ACCIDENT

Location: Honolulu, Hawaii
Date: July 2, 2021
Time: 0145 Hawaii standard time (HST)
1145 coordinated universal time (UTC)
Airplane: Boeing 737-200, N810TA, Rhoades Aviation Inc, dba TransAir Flt. 810

B. MEDICAL SPECIALIST

Specialist Michelle Watters, MD, PhD, MPH
National Transportation Safety Board, RE-1
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C. DETAILS OF THE INVESTIGATION

Purpose

This investigation was performed to evaluate the captain and first officer for medical conditions, the use of medications/illicit drugs, and the presence of toxins.

Methods

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) medical certification files, FAA Forensic Sciences Laboratory toxicology¹ reports, and post-accident medical records for the captain and first officer were reviewed. Pre-event medical records and U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) post-accident toxicology results for the first officer were also reviewed; the captain did not receive post-accident DOT drug testing. Other relevant medical and regulatory issues were reviewed.

D. FACTUAL INFORMATION

1.0 Captain

1.1 FAA Medical Certification File

According to the FAA medical certification file, at the time of the accident, the 58-year-old male captain held a first class medical certificate with the limitation that he must wear corrective lenses. At the time of the most recent exam (2/4/21), the captain reported 15,500 total hours of flight experience and was 69 inches tall and weighed 172 pounds. The captain reported taking no medications and having no

¹ The FAA Forensic Sciences Laboratory has the capability to test for more than 1,300 substances including toxins, common prescription and over-the-counter medications, and illicit drugs. <https://jag.cami.jccbi.gov/toxicology/>

medical conditions. The file included examinations for the captain dating back to 1986.

1.2 Toxicology

The FAA Forensic Sciences Laboratory detected the anesthetic etomidate in the captain's hospital admission blood and urine. Etomidate is a short-acting medication administered intravenously for the induction of general anesthesia.²

No post-accident DOT drug testing was performed for the captain by his employer.

1.3 Post-Accident Medical Records

Post-accident medical records were obtained for the captain. Upon arrival at the hospital, the captain was placed on a ventilator; etomidate was administered for the procedure. His diagnosis was aspiration with respiratory failure. His clinical urine drug screen was negative, and his blood alcohol level was negative. The captain was discharged after two days (7/4/21).

2.0 First Officer

2.1 FAA Medical Certification File

According to the FAA medical certification file, at the time of the accident, the 50-year-old male first officer held a second class medical certificate with the limitation that he must wear corrective lenses. At the time of the most recent exam (6/22/21), the first officer reported 5,202 total hours of flight experience and was 69 inches tall and weighed 192 pounds. The first officer had exams between 1989 and 1995; no medications or medical conditions were reported for those exams. There were no exams between 1996 and 2018.

2.2 Toxicology

FAA Forensic Sciences Laboratory toxicology testing detected four medications in the first officer's blood or urine, one of which is impairing and is used to treat an impairing medical condition.

The employer's post-accident DOT drug panel testing performed on the first officer's urine specimen 18 hours after the accident was marked as negative by the medical review officer.

² National Institutes of Health (NIH). U.S. National Library of Medicine (NLM). [DailyMed - ETOMIDATE- etomidate injection solution \(nih.gov\)](https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/drugInfo.cfm?id=68752) Updated 7/22/19.

2.3 Post-Accident Medical Records

Post-accident medical records were obtained for the first officer. At the hospital, his principal diagnosis was scalp laceration. His other admission diagnoses included blunt head trauma, cervical strain, and aspiration pneumonitis. His clinical urine drug screening was negative, and his blood alcohol level was negative. The first officer was discharged from the hospital after about twelve hours.

E. SUMMARY OF MEDICAL FACTS

Captain

The 58-year-old male captain held a first class medical certificate with the limitation that he must wear corrective lenses. At the time of the most recent exam (2/4/21), the captain reported taking no medications and having no medical conditions. His FAA medical certification file dated back to 1986.

According to post-accident medical records, the captain's diagnosis was aspiration with respiratory failure. His clinical urine drug screen and his blood alcohol level were both negative. He was discharged from the hospital after two days.

First Officer

The 50-year-old male first officer held a second class medical certificate with the limitation that he must wear corrective lenses. His most recent exam was on 6/22/21. The first officer's previous exams were between 1989 and 1995. There were no exams between 1996 and 2018.

Post-accident toxicology testing by the FAA Forensic Sciences Laboratory detected four medications in the first officer's blood or urine, one of which is impairing and is used to treat an impairing medical condition. The employer's post-accident DOT urine drug testing performed 18 hours after the accident was marked as negative by the medical review officer.

According to post-accident medical records, the first officer was diagnosed with a scalp laceration. His other admission diagnoses included blunt head trauma, cervical strain, and aspiration pneumonitis. His clinical urine drug screen and his blood alcohol level were both negative. The first officer was discharged from the hospital after about twelve hours.

Submitted by:

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