

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety

Washington, DC 20594



DCA23LA096

SURVIVAL FACTORS

Specialist's Factual Report

ATTACHMENT 2: Passenger interviews

November 19, 2024

Passengers 11A and 11B

They were seated in 11A and 11B just behind first class. Passenger 11A was sleeping/half awake, but thought they were around 40,000 feet. They both remembered the seat belt sign being on and announcements being made to keep seat belts on. They did not specifically remember turbulence being mentioned in the announcements.

They felt the airplane take a turn and then start downward steeply. Passenger 11A told passenger 11B, "we are going down" and expected to see water based on how it felt. Nothing fell on them from above. They saw a woman seated in first class fly up in the air, summersault with feet over her head before falling back down into the seats. They did not believe she had her seat belt on.

There was non-uniformed flight crew who assessed the injured, ensuring they got treatment, and helped by relaying ambulance requirements to the cockpit. The cabin crew walked through asking people if they were injured, writing it down, and turning lights on over seats where the more seriously injured were seated.

When they left to disembark after landing, passenger 11B walked a short distance before starting to feel faint. Cabin crew offered her a wheelchair and she used it to get off. She was grateful for the assistance. She had a slight headache right after the event, and a little the next morning, but neither sustained any injuries or aftereffects. They both stated that the flight and cabin crews did great work after the event.

Passenger 11D

He was a non-revenue Hawaiian Airlines pilot seated in 11D. Twenty minutes after takeoff he went to the lower crew rest area. With about 50 minutes left in the flight he returned to his seat. Most of the cabin had already been secured for descent and landing except for first class. The seat belt sign was on, and he recalled an automated message stating "the captain has turned on the seat belt sign." He did not recall any special messages about potential turbulence; however, he was watching a show and said he could have missed an announcement.

With approximately 40 minutes left in the flight he felt a "mountain wave action." The motion felt to be more of an "uplift" rather than the up and down motion of a typical wave. He estimated it lasted five seconds.

He then experienced a hard jolt which immediately led into a free fall sensation, where he was lifted from his seat but was restrained by his seat belt on. It happened a second time, and he saw a cell phone floating nearby. He came down into his seat with a second jolt. He estimated the whole sequence lasted about 10 seconds and described it as "very violent." When the event ended, he remembered thinking "it's pretty bad." He started hearing mumbling throughout the cabin. People were stating things like, "did you see that guy in the air?" and "the cart was in the air."

He got out of his seat and began to make his way forward to the cabin crew around first class. He knew they had been standing at the time of the event. He came upon a woman who was upside down in a seat in first class. She was assigned to 3C but was upside down in seat 3G. He helped get her reseated and continued into first class to check on the flight attendants.

The flight attendants were standing when he got to them. They seemed shaken but okay. He then started rearward through the cabin. He stopped to look out the window at the left wing to start assessing the integrity of the aircraft. He noted the wing looked good, and no parts were missing. He also noted that there were clouds well below the aircraft, perhaps a few thousand feet. It stuck in his mind, as he expected to be in clouds given the violent turbulence.

He continued working his way backwards in the cabin and saw panels hanging off the ceiling. In order to help secure the cabin for arrival they started removing the loose panels. He stowed all loose panels in the lower crew rest area around mid-cabin. He stated that no panels landed on any passengers.

The flight attendants made a call for doctors for help, but he did not notice if anyone stood up. Farther back in the cabin he noticed considerably more people with blood on them. Also, at least a dozen oxygen compartments were open with masks hanging down. Lots of passengers were in shock with flight attendants helping care for them. He let the off-duty crew members tend to most of the passengers while he continued to work his way through the cabin securing panel and debris.

The mid-galley flight attendants had at least two cabin crew who were "incapacitated." A third person had a knee injury. These occupants described trying to hang onto the bulkhead during the event and were in the air.

He noted there were many head and neck injuries so they tried to use passengers neck pillows to stabilize their neck until medical crews could get to them. He noted that many were bleeding and were trying to keep pressure on their wounds; however, there were not enough bandages and people started using shirts and other personal items to help stop their bleeding.

Farther back in the cabin there were two flight attendants in their jumpseats both appeared to be in shock. One complained that her back felt "like it was burning" and the other was staring off into space and was nonresponsive to his inquiries.

He made his way to the other side of the aircraft and noted many more people with minor laceration and abrasion-type injuries. A couple of people had hit their head on the overhead compartments. He stopped to speak to a mother with a lap held infant and the mom said the child was in good shape. The men sitting around her described her as a "mama bear" and reported that she held the infant throughout the entire event.

He notified the cockpit crew about the integrity of the aircraft in the back, and that they would need at least a dozen ambulances to meet them at the gate. For the rest of the flight, he continued to work his way through the cabin helping stabilizing people. Upon landing and parking at the gate, the seat belt sign stayed on and no one deplaned while medical personnel came on board. They some passengers off

by stretcher and some by wheelchair. There was a triage area set up outside the gate area.

He felt that his seatbelt was pretty loose at the time of the event, with about 6 inches of slack. He did not have any postaccident bruising or soreness from his seat belt. His back was a little sore.

Passengers 29H and 29J

They were traveling with a lap held 14-month-old infant who was being held by the mother seated in 29H. The seat belt sign was on and an announcement had been made. They both had their seat belts on. They reported the airplane turning and then it started "diving down." It felt like they hit something. For about three seconds non-secured items like jackets and phones were floating in the air. Then there were two hard hits. The entire event lasted about 30 seconds or a minute. The mother reported the infant flew up out of her arms but did not impact anything and she quickly caught her. They were not injured.

Passenger 31C

The passenger reported that she slept through most of the flight. She woke up to use the bathroom about the time an announcement was made that they were 40 minutes away from landing. Seconds after she walked into the bathroom the turbulence occurred.

She felt the airplane shake and immediately flew face first into the ceiling. Then she was thrown abruptly back onto the floor onto her stomach. This caused injuries to the right side of her face around her eye and compression injuries to her spine.

After lying on the floor for several minutes she crawled back to her seat, which was next to the bathroom. She crawled up into her seat and put her seat belt on. The couple seated next to her helped her get situated. They gave her water and a napkin to help clean the blood and debris from the ceiling out of her lacerations. She was able to walk and was escorted off the plane by medical personnel. She could not turn her head or see out of her right eye from the swelling. She was taken to the hospital in an ambulance.

Passenger 35A

Passenger 35A was assigned to seat 46C but was moved to 35A during the boarding process. The flight attendants started to gather trash and provide the agriculture forms to fill out. About that time, she heard an announcement that they would be making their final descent into Honolulu in approximately 10 minutes, and to use the restroom if necessary.

She then laid her head against the window and shut her eyes for two or three minutes when it felt like they "hit a curb." There was an abrupt jerk of the nose of the airplane downward, and they dropped very fast. There was some shaking and more jerks and then another freefall. It was loud and she was "jerked all over the place."

She saw that there were broken parts of the ceiling exposing wires, and some of the oxygen masks had dropped.

She was in shock and felt no pain. A short time later she heard an announcement for any medical personnel to come to the back of the airplane. She saw both on and off-duty flight attendants who were injured but did not hesitate to care for the passengers who were badly injured. The flight attendants did an excellent job keeping the passengers calm.

After they landed, paramedics came on board and took the seriously injured off first. When she left the airplane there was a triage area set up near the gate. They took down her information and her injuries. She drove herself to the hospital, where they took x-rays and she was told she had a sprained neck and shoulder. Additionally, she reported the left side of her pelvis was "out of alignment," causing pain in her lower back.