

FLIGHT CREW STATEMENTS, AAL #160: ORD – ATH, DIVERT TO PHL

CA, Pilot Flying (PF)

On September 28, 2023, I was the Captain on flight 160 from Chicago to Athens. During a cruise climb, a Flight Attendant was injured by a falling service cart.

Before our flight, my cockpit crew was issued our flight plan and weather documents per our standard operating procedures. I briefed the Flight Attendants before our departure. My briefing included a general statement about turbulence precautions. Additionally, I pointed out areas in the flight using WSI to indicate where we may encounter turbulence. Approximately 45 minutes into the flight, we initiated a cruise climb to get above expected turbulence further into the flight. While in relatively smooth air and during our climb, we received a call from the Flight Attendants indicating a Flight Attendant was injured from a falling cart. At the time of the injury, I would categorize the turbulence as less than occasional light.

A nurse onboard treated the injured Flight Attendant. We were advised that the flight attendant's ankle was possibly broken. We called dispatch using the satellite phone and coordinated a diversion.

Upon reaching Philadelphia, paramedics and a Flight Attendant supervisor met the flight. The Flight Attendant supervisor found that the brakes on the fallen service cart had failed.

FO, Pilot Monitoring (PM)

During the climb to the final cruise altitude of FL370, ATC assigned an intermediate level off at FL330. During the level off at FL330, the captain and I discussed the need for the seat belt sign. [Flight conditions were intermittent light chop.] The determination was made to leave the seat belt sign on, and I made the initial climb out PA, nearly verbatim, as outlined in the FOM. Shortly after completing the PA, ATC cleared a climb to FL350. The captain was PF and performed a normal climb to FL350 with the autopilot engaged. Soon after level off, I answered a cabin call. The FA explained that a service cart had fallen on and injured the FA2. As she was explaining the situation, I told her to explain the situation to the captain and I gave him the interphone. After he completed the call, it was determined the injury was severe enough that a divert was necessary. Dispatch was informed, and the decision was made by dispatch and the captain to divert to KPHL. ATC was informed we had a medical issue onboard and were given priority handling to KPHL. An uneventful divert and overweight landing was made. Paramedics met the aircraft at the gate and attended to the injured FA2.

First Officer, FB position

The paperwork for the flight, including the weather, was briefed with all three crewmembers present. There were no concerns about turbulence. The flight departed and was out of 10,000 feet when I was directed to take the first crew break. I was sleeping in the bunk when I was contacted by the flight deck about a possible diversion due to a flight attendant being injured from a beverage cart. The cause of the beverage cart falling over wasn't immediately known, and of course, turbulence would have been suspect, but I felt nothing of significance in the bunk. When I returned to the flight deck, I was informed that the ride was reasonably good. I believe after landing, the suspect beverage cart's braking mechanism was tested by someone and found inadequate. My understanding of this incident was more about the cart possibly rolling and/or turning over and causing injury due to faulty brakes or mishandling and not attributed to a turbulence event.