

Southwest Airlines Co.
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[REDACTED]



April 10, 2024

Sathya Silva
Senior Aviation Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

RE: Southwest Airlines Flight 4273 Crew Statements

Sathya and Warren,

Per your request, please find below the statements from the Flight Crew, Cabin Crew, and Dispatchers involved in the serious injury event on April 3, 2024.

Flight Crew

Captain

Part 141 Pilot training Napa California IASCO; Private pilot license through Multi-instrument Commercial license.
Finished with total flight time – 250+hours

1992-1998 CFII & Part 135 Single/multiengine VFR/IFR certified in Spokane Washington.
Finished with total flight time – 2,500+hours

1998-2005 Colgan Air FO/Captain/Check Airmen/Assistant Chief Pilot (BE-1900, SF-340)
Finished with total flight time – 5,500+hours

2005-2012 AirTran Airways FO B717(DC-9)
Finished with total flight time – 10,000+hours

2012-Present Southwest Airlines – Approximately 17,800+hours

On April 3, 2024, I was the Captain of Flight 4273 from KMSY to KMCO. This was our first flight of the day with a scheduled departure of 0640 Local. I was the Pilot Monitoring (PM) and the First Officer (FO) was the Pilot Flying (PF). The FO and I had been paired together the previous day.

After arriving at the gate and speaking with the Gate Agent about fuel, specials, etc., I continued to the aircraft where both the FO and I began our first flight of the day cockpit checklist/flows. After the Flight Attendants finished their safety checks, they all came to the front of the cabin for our face-to-face pre-flight briefing. Starting with introductions, and wanting to have a shared mental model, I then covered the route and potential enroute weather, showing and explaining the printed weather charts in the Dispatch release, flight time, destination weather, MEL's, and Specials (jumpseaters, deadheads crews, FAM's etc).

At that point we briefed what to do at the 10,000' chime. Options discussed were to remain seated and confer with me at 10,000' and decide amongst themselves if they felt the conditions were conducive to start service or remain seated until reaching cruise altitude where the conditions were expected to be better. We agreed that the Flight Attendants would decide amongst themselves what to do upon reaching 10,000', and assuming it was smooth after passing through 10,000' that they would begin their inflight service. I informed them that at any time the ride became too uncomfortable, they should take their jumpseats and call to let us know they were seated. They understood and were in full agreement with my instructions.

Due to gusting winds on takeoff, we experienced light chop on climb out until above the initial cloud layer. After the 10,000' chime, I did not hear from the Flight Attendants. We continued climbing, with occasional chop, and leveled at FL370, well above the weather system. The Fasten Seat Belt sign remained on the entire flight. Between the FO and myself, we were using aircraft radar, WSI App on our EFB with vertical profile displayed, TAPS reports, and

JeppFD. Utilizing our weather resources, as well as visual observations, we were able to successfully remain clear of any developing thunderstorm cells.

Approximately 40 minutes into the flight while approaching waypoint REMIS, we began to encounter light turbulence and began deviations around cells prior to waypoint ROZZI. The weather system was moving ENE, and the controller gave us a choice to descend and deviate to the south (right of course), or maintain our altitude and deviate to the left of course. We did not want to descend at that time and deviating to the left of course kept us on top of the weather system (tops were showing FL340-FL350). The PF asked me if the Flight Attendants were seated, and I advised that they were aware of the situation and using their best judgement as we had briefed.

While deviating, the tops of the cells that were northeast of REMIS were showing FL400. As we turned toward REMIS, the tops of the cells in front of us were still below us. Shortly after turning back to REMIS, we encountered a rapid developing cloud and the PF said he wanted to turn further right (south) to avoid the rapidly developing cloud tops. I agreed and without hesitation the PF turned to the right while I made a PA for the Flight Attendants to take their seats. Within seconds we experienced severe turbulence that caused the autopilot to disconnect as we experienced a 30-degree bank angle excursion. During the severe turbulence event we also experienced minimal altitude excursions, probably no more than +/- 150 feet and Vmo was exceeded by approximately 15kts (the low and high-speed limit indications were in constant motion).

Once through the turbulence event and back on altitude, I spoke with the "A" Flight Attendant who informed me that they were assisting two injured people and there was minor damage to the interior, such as an Emergency Exit sign that was hanging down. We made the decision to divert to TPA after verifying that the weather was good there. I notified ATC and declared a medical emergency. The FO expedited the descent safely and smoothly. I notified Dispatch and requested that EMS meet us at the assigned gate of C32. I ran the diversion checklist and continued to communicate with the "A" Flight Attendant on the cabin conditions and the two injured people. After requesting new performance numbers, we ran the remaining Normal Checklists. I made a PA to the passengers and asked for them to remain seated when we arrived at the gate as to allow the medical personnel to board and assist the injured parties.

We continued on assigned radar vectors for Runway 19R and, as requested, I continually updated each controller on the status of the injured parties. The approach and landing at TPA were uneventful. Upon exiting the runway, the FO called TPA Ground Control and SWA Operations, confirming our assigned gate. I then made another PA reminding the passengers to remain seated so that EMS personnel could board the aircraft to treat the injured parties.

We taxied to the gate and executed a normal shutdown. The FO called for maintenance, and I went to the cabin to assist as needed and assess the situation. The EMS personnel entered the aircraft and began treating the injured parties. Eventually, we were cleared to deplane the remaining passengers.

After all the passengers had disembarked, I contacted Dispatch, and we had a conference call with the NOC Chief Pilot and Maintenance Control. Upon completion of the call, I made a detailed logbook entry as requested by Maintenance Control. I then proceeded to the back of the aircraft, and I observed the injured Flight Attendant and passenger being lowered to the ramp via the PROVO truck, and into the waiting ambulances. The FO and I then went down to the ramp to meet them and were able to speak with both of them directly and check on their status. The "A" Flight Attendant remained with the injured Flight Attendant and accompanied the Flight Attendant to the hospital. Crew scheduling arranged for flights home for the remaining crew members. Once the airplane was clear of all personnel and the logbook was secure, we departed on our deadhead flight back to base.

First Officer

I began my career learning to fly at a FAR Part 141 training academy where I earned all of my certificates from Private to CFII/MEI. I went on to instruct at this academy as a Commercial Ground School, Flight Instructor, Check Instructor, and FAA approved End of Course Examiner.

In 2007 – 2018 I worked for SkyWest Airlines. I was a First Officer on the EMB 120 and then transitioned to the CRJ 200/700/900 in approximately 2015, I upgraded to Captain in the CRJ. While at SkyWest, I volunteered as a

Professional Standards Facilitator.

I was hired by Southwest in 2018 and have been a First Officer to present day. Since joining Southwest I have been a volunteer mentor to new hire First Officers and Destination 225 Cadets.

I have 13,080 hrs. of Total Flight Time, 3,140 of which are at Southwest as a First Officer in the B737, and 3,257 hours of PIC throughout my career.

On April 3, 2024, I was the First Officer (FO) and Pilot Flying (PF) for Flight 4273 from KMSY to KMCO. This was our first flight of the day with a scheduled departure of 0640 local (1140Z). The Captain (CA) and I were paired together the previous day operating just one leg.

Prior to departure we did our standard preflight duties. The CA briefed the Flight Attendants (FA's) while I did my normal walk around and preflight. We discussed the flight and need for a destination alternate that had been planned for us and possible enroute weather. We departed KMSY at 0654 Local (1154Z) with an Expect Departure Clearance Time (EDCT) of 0657 Local (1157Z). Departure and climb out from KMSY were uneventful other than experiencing some light turbulence. We had the radar on and being displayed on both of our multi-function displays. We were able to get above the weather system rather quickly and climbed to our assigned cruise altitude of FL370 (our filed and requested altitude of FL390 was unavailable due to traffic). We continued to display the onboard radar and utilized the WSI app on our EFB's. For an unknown reason, I was unable to connect to the internet and used the CA's iPad.

Established on course and leveled by ATC at FL370, we could see weather developing at our next waypoint ROZZI. The cell was also visible on the radar, and I suggested to the CA that we should deviate around the cell as it did not appear that we would be on top of it. The CA agreed and queried ATC about deviating around the cell. ATC stated that previous flights had deviated right and to the south to avoid the cell. However, based on what we could see outside our window and on the radar display, deviating to the right (south) was no longer the best option. While the CA and I discussed our options, we were handed to the next controller. Upon check in, the new controller said if we deviate to right (south) we would need to descend to FL 350.

ATC also stated that we could deviate to the left of the cell and maintain our current altitude. We chose to deviate left of course due to the better radar picture at waypoint ROZZI and ability to maintain FL370, which at the time would keep us above the weather. The CA had been monitoring the WSI app and it was displaying tops ranging from FL340 to FL350 in the area around our intended flight path.

As we began deviating, I asked the CA if the FA's were seated. The CA said they were aware of the weather in the area, the possibility for turbulence, and were using their best judgement. The seat belt sign remained on as it had been the entire flight after experiencing occasional light turbulence and chop throughout the flight.

ATC approved our deviation to the left and we were cleared direct REMIS when able. We deviated about 30 degrees to the left and continued to monitor the onboard radar and WSI the entire time, making small adjustments as radar returns depicted ahead at 40 and 80 mile ranges. We continued to make small adjustments and were successfully keeping clear of developing cells. WSI showed a cell topping out at FL400 northwest of REMIS, otherwise the tops were around FL340 to FL350 immediately around us. We were able to find a clear path and proceeded direct to waypoint REMIS. At this time, visibility was intermittent IMC and marginal VFR with occasional light chop/turbulence.

When proceeding to REMIS our visibility eventually improved, at which time I saw a rapidly building cloud top that was in our flightpath but was not painting on our onboard radar. I informed the CA and wanted to deviate around the cell. I asked for the CA to make a PA to ensure everyone was still seated, which was completed. As the CA was contacting ATC to request the deviation, I began a right turn to avoid the still building cell. In anticipation of turbulence, I slowed the aircraft to create a larger buffer between the low/high speed limits, flying approximately .74/.75 mach. Unfortunately, we were unable to complete the turn in time and entered the buildup. Shortly thereafter we encountered severe turbulence that lasted approximately 10 seconds. I maintained level flight the best I could, we probably experienced a 30-degree angle of bank at one point. However, my priority was maintaining a safe airspeed as this was where I was seeing the greatest fluctuations. I

observed speed deviations of 15-20 kts. It was difficult to determine exactly what the low and high-speed limit indications were during the turbulence. We exceeded VMO and the aural alarm sounded. We also had minor altitude deviations of approximately +200' to -100' during the event.

After the severe turbulence subsided, we experienced moderate turbulence for about one minute. We were able to quickly get back to straight and level flight, re-establish proper airspeed, and stabilize on the assigned altitude of FL370. Upon exiting the weather, the CA called to check on the FA's and the condition of the passenger cabin. The CA said there were injuries and some interior damage, although we did not know the extent of the injuries or damage. The FA's eventually called back and provided a more detailed report of the injuries and damage. Based on the information from the FA's, we discussed a potential divert to Tampa. The CA was already using ACARS communication with dispatch regarding turbulence and communicating with FA's regarding the injuries and damages while I checked ATIS for Tampa. After looking at the weather at KTPA it was determined that KTPA was a suitable alternate and the closest airport to our position. We agreed to divert to Tampa and the CA immediately communicated our intentions to ATC and declared a medical emergency.

We immediately began diversion procedures and I continued to fly as expeditiously as I could to KTPA for a normal approach and landing. Upon landing, we immediately taxied to Gate 32 where paramedics were waiting for us. I made an announcement per the CA's request as we were pulling into the gate to remind everyone to remain seated until medical personnel could come on board. EMS personnel began treating the injured passenger and FA. Ops personnel deplaned the passengers. I called Station MX and informed them we would need an inspection for exceeding VMO due to severe turbulence. Once there we also showed them the broken emergency exit/seat belt sign.

We were asked questions regarding what airspeed excursions we experienced during the turbulence event, as well as other parameters experienced. We answered the best we could recall, and the CA made an entry into the maintenance logbook. Additionally, we assisted with the deplaning process and proceeded down to the ramp to check on the injured Flight Attendant and passenger who were being transferred into ambulances at that time. We eventually left the plane in the hands of Maintenance personnel and deadheaded back to our domicile of KBWI.

Cabin Crew

Flight Attendant 'A'

On 3 April 2024, I was the A Flight Attendant on Flt. #4273, MSY to MCO. The day started as all regular operations begin. Security checks, equipment checks, and completion of necessary paperwork. A crew briefing was conducted by the Capt. No MEL's were noted, and weather information was relayed to us. Boarding was unremarkable, and we departed MSY.

Climb out toward our cruise altitude was only occasional light turbulence. Once at a safe altitude, and the aircraft was at a level attitude, we began service procedures. The first half of the service progressed normally. As I made my way back to the forward galley, the Capt. stated over the PA "Flight attendants take your seats" I reached the forward jump seat just as, (in my estimation) the initial moderate turbulence hit. The force was strong enough to drive my left shoulder into the lighting control module on the bulkhead wall, and then slam me forcefully into the jump seat. I buckled in just as the severe turbulence struck. I witnessed passenger being forcefully thrown against their seatbelts, and numerous beverages fly through the air and strike the ceiling. I also watched the C Flight Attendant attempt to secure herself in the aisle by sitting on the floor, in a tripod position. During the worst of the turbulence, I watched as the C was lifted off the floor, and into the air approx. 8 to 10 inches. She then fell back to the floor unharmed from what I could see. As the turbulence decreased, I visually inspected the cabin for damage, noting that the aft galley Emergency Exit sign was dangling from the ceiling by its electrical cord. All other cabin structures remained secure and in place.

With the worst of the turbulence over, I left my jump seat to check on the C and the passengers. Making my way down the aisle, I saw several aft cabin passengers waving at me in an urgent manner. I checked on the C, she appeared uninjured, so I stepped over her and made my way to the aft galley. Reaching the galley, I found Flight

Attendant B laying in the aisle, where the galley begins, on her left side. I immediately noticed she had a large hematoma to her right forehead, about the size of a golf ball. Her right arm was visibly fractured at the distal Humerus, elbow, and possibly upper Radius-Ulna section of her arm. When asked how she was doing she complained of severe right hip pain. I checked to make sure she had pulses in all her injured extremities. She did, so I moved on to the next injured individual in the galley. On the floor next to the B was a female passenger. Her legs in the lavatory, and her torso was in the middle of the galley floor. She was on her left side in almost a perfect "recovery" position. She was holding her neck with her right arm. I ask her where she hurt. she said her neck and back hurt. There was noted swelling to her right side neck. I checked her back, and observed no obvious deformity. I felt on her back, and she complained of mid thoracic back pain. Her level of consciousness was decreased. She was only able to give me her name and age. I next called the Capt. and told her we had injured crew and passengers in the aft galley, and that the aircraft had sustained minimal cabin structural damage. She told me to keep her advised of any developing situations. She also said we would divert to Tampa.

I checked on the B again, and told her I was going to check for additional injuries in the cabin, and that I would be back soon. She nodded in agreement, and I left the galley I made my way forward, asking repeatedly, "Is anyone injured, is everyone OK?, Are the kiddos OK?" Everyone appeared to be uninjured. Once in the front galley, I met up with the C again. I checked her for injuries, and she said she was all right. I told her to remain in the front galley for the remainder of the flight. And that I was going to land in the aft galley with the B and the injured passenger. I returned to the aft galley. The floor was awash with drinks, ruptured cans, unopened cans, and galley supplies. As we were in descent for landing, I quickly stowed anything on the floor or cabinets that could cause additional injuries from any more turbulence or landing. I, with the help of an ABA in the last row, who could assist me while still remaining seat belted, positioned the B in a semi seated position on the floor against the emergency equipment bulkhead wall. This caused a great deal of pain, but she was more secure for the landing. Returning her to a seat or jump seat was out of the question due to the severity and number of injuries that could be aggravated by the move. This also held true for my other injured passenger. I positioned myself sitting on the floor of the galley, in a manner so that I could support the injured passenger's neck and back, and hopefully prevent any further injury during landing. I was also able to support the B's hip and arm from moving, with my other leg. I reached over her chest with my arm and grasped her left arm to help brace her for the landing and deceleration of the aircraft. The ABA also kept his leg out in the aisle as to also help prevent the B from sliding or any unnecessary movement. Minutes before landing, the passenger with us in the galley began vomiting, so I placed a small rag I found (where it came from, I have no idea) under her forehead to keep her breathing as easy as possible. We landed, and quickly taxied to the gate. Tampa Fire/Rescue entered the aircraft and began treatment of the injured parties. I accompanied the B in the Ambulance to Shock Trauma (St. Josephs Hospital) in Tampa. I remained there until a family friend arrived to be with her. I then went back to the Airport so I could return to the BWI base

Dispatchers

Flight Planning Dispatcher

Flight was planned using standard routing, forecast for convective had most of the activity north of the planned route. Enroute Altitude was planned at FL390 to hopefully aide in seeing and avoiding Convection. Convective activity was present in the Gulf of Mexico with most of current weather north of the planned route, later in the day the convection was become more wide-spread in the Gulf. Twenty-five minutes of Cont/Hold would suffice for weather deviation if needed. An Alternate was added for possible marginal weather in MCO, if longer deviation for weather was needed the alternate could be dropped or shortened (if able) and use that fuel. Turned over the desk to AM dispatcher around 1100z. Flight was scheduled to depart MSY 1140z.

Flight Following Dispatcher

On April 3rd I was scheduled to take over desk 44 at 6am local. The flight in question had already been planned by the Dispatcher working the overnight shift. The scheduled departure time for this flight was at 6:40AM CDT. I reviewed the flight plan, weather, and advisories. The weather packet included the convective SIGMETs 37E and 38E. Nothing seemed out of the normal for this morning. The flight was planned at FL390 on the preferred company routing.

Along this routing there was a broken area of convection extending into the Gulf from southwest to North east,

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moving from 240 at 60kts, where the most scattered area was to the South West with several gaps for navigation. Flight following was normal throughout the gulf. Volume was not at capacity and ATC seemed to accommodate quite a bit of ad hoc vectoring.

As this flight was carried out, I continued to monitor the situation and watch for any other flights reporting anything out of the normal, there were none. All other flights on my desk, as well as other flights in our system, were making it around the weather with non-issues.

At approximately 1232z I was informed via ACARS that there were multiple injuries due to severe turbulence. I asked for the location and confirm altitude, with no response. I notified the rest of my flights behind this one and made an all call through the loudspeaker, notifying the floor of the severe turbulence. I added the Pirep to fusion. The flight crew informed me via ACARS that they were going to TPA due to the injuries. I amended the release to show TPA as the new destination due to the injuries. TPA operations were contacted and made aware of the emergency and we requested multiple EMS to meet the flight. I notified our MOC, COD and our SOD. The flight continued to TPA where EMS had met the plane.

Thank you,

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