

Southwest Airlines Co.  
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[REDACTED]



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January 3, 2024

Doug Brazy  
Aviation Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

RE: Southwest Airlines Flight 2217 Flight Crew Statements

Doug,

Per your request, please find below the statements from the Flight Crew involved in the bird strike event resulting in substantial damage on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

**Captain**

Climbing out of 6,000ft after departing from KSTL enroute to KMDW, the first officer and I observed what appeared to be a bird rapidly pass by from right to left diagonally across the nose of the aircraft. We immediately felt a slight bump in what seemed like the front of the airplane and we assumed the bird had hit somewhere in the vicinity of the nose. There was no change in the performance of the airplane. We scanned all engine instruments to see that everything was normal, we made sure the aircraft was still pressurizing and there were no abnormal smells that would indicate we had ingested the bird through the engine. I was the CA and PF at the time and with the autopilot off, I evaluated the feel of the flight controls and everything felt normal; no abnormal vibrations and no change to controllability of the aircraft.

Together after assessing the situation, we determined that we hit the bird but it hadn't operationally damaged the airplane in a way that would affect the safety of flight and we both decided to continue the short flight from STL to MDW. I sent an ACARS message to Maintenance indicating that we thought we hit a bird on climb out so they could meet the aircraft in MDW to assess what, if any damage had occurred as a result of the bird strike.

The flight continued to MDW without further incident. Upon arrival at the gate, the first officer and I went outside to try to find any evidence of a bird strike and found what appeared to be significant damage to the left leading edge of the horizontal stabilizer from the impact of the bird. Maintenance was notified and a logbook entry was made.

**First Officer**

The flight was KSTL to KMDW, and the Captain was the pilot flying, I was pilot monitoring. Around 6,000ft we saw a quick flash of white followed by a thud. We assumed it was a bird that more than likely impacted in the nose/belly area. We monitored systems closely to make sure the impact did not affect the safety of the aircraft. The captain continued to hand fly to feel for any pressure changes in the control surfaces. We assessed the situation and decided the best option was to continue normal operation to KMDW. We sent an ACARS message ahead to let dispatch/maintenance know and would be ready to inspect to aircraft on arrival. We discovered the damage on the post-flight walk around and maintenance took over the situation from there. The captain wrote up the bird strike and filled out the proper reports.

Thank you,

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