
May 9, 2024

Mike Hauf
Aviation Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

RE: Southwest Airlines Flight 5797 Flight Crew Statements

Mike,

Per your request, please find below the statements from the Flight Crew and Cabin Crew involved in the serious injury event on March 14, 2024.

Flight Crew

Captain

Upon arrival at the aircraft in MDW, I briefed the forward two Flight Attendants about our flight to CHS. We were on a tight aircraft swap and the flight was already boarded when the First Officer and I arrived. I was not able to meet the two Flight Attendants in the aft galley before departure, but I was assured that my preflight briefing would be relayed to them. I informed them to expect a rough ride climbing out of Chicago, and that if we did find smooth air, it would not last long. I also discussed we had a line of convective weather we would need to deviate through and that it would be turbulent until we were well clear of that weather.

Much of our climb and initial cruise were turbulent as forecasted. When we eventually found a smooth ride, it did not last long. The smooth ride occurred approximately 20 minutes away from a turbulence advisory box so I notified the Flight Attendants that if they got up, I wanted them in their seats at least five minutes before we would be entering that box. A picture of this box, taken at that time, is included with my narrative. I also had a good idea of the location of turbulence because I had access to our new SkyPath App as an EFB beta tester. With this information, I gave the Flight Attendants a specific time that I wanted them seated in their jumpseats.

As anticipated, it was light to moderate turbulence going through the line of weather. The turbulence persisted farther downwind of the weather, so I called to advise the Flight Attendants that the anticipated area of smooth air was not materializing. It was only then that I was informed that the "D" position Flight Attendant in the aft galley had injured herself by splashing a pot of coffee onto her head, face, and shoulders during the previous turbulence.

We were frequent and explicit in contacting the Flight Attendants throughout the entire flight. With all the information that we had and specific information about how short any smooth air would last; I did not expect that the Flight Attendants would even attempt to do any kind of service whatsoever.

I immediately sent an ACARS to our Dispatcher informing that we had an injured Flight Attendant onboard. I did not have time to contact StatMD as we were approaching the top of descent, and I did not want to saturate ourselves with additive conditions when the injuries were not life threatening. Additionally, I radioed ahead to CHS Station Ops to inform them that we would require assistance. The aircraft was met by paramedics who immediately transported the injured Flight Attendant to Medical University of South Carolina.

Picture Attached:



First Officer

On March 14, 2024 we arrived into KMDW delayed from our inbound flight from KDAL. We were scheduled to change aircraft in KMDW and the outbound aircraft was already boarded when we arrived. We completed our pre-flight duties and were able to push back only eight minutes late. The Captain briefed the "A" and "B" position Flight Attendants in the forward galley about the line of weather and expected turbulence enroute as part of his Preflight Briefing. As a crew, we knew that we would have to deal with weather enroute to KCHS as the forecast was showing a long line of thunderstorms extending from Ohio to Mississippi. Shortly after pushback, Ground Control informed us that several aircraft were holding positions to await new ATC clearances with a re-route for weather.

Once we received our updated clearance the Captain coordinated with Dispatch for a new fuel plan based on our re-route. Dispatch confirmed and validated our fuel load for the re-route, and we safely departed KMDW. Upon nearing the line of thunderstorms on our radar, we had to deviate from the flight plan route to the right of course to find the safest way around the thunderstorms. We were able to find a gap in the weather that the radar depicted we would be above the precipitation and away from any significant build-ups. This was also the same path other aircraft were following.

Before proceeding on this course, I confirmed with the Captain that the Flight Attendants were notified to be seated since we were expecting turbulence as we passed above the weather. We experienced continuous light to moderate turbulence as we navigated through the line of weather. Approximately one hour out from Charleston the Flight Attendants called the Captain to notify him that the "D" position Flight Attendant had burned herself from coffee spilling from the carafe during the turbulence. The Captain messaged Dispatch via ACARS of the injury and coordinated to have medical personnel available and standing by at the gate upon arrival. The injured Flight Attendant asked that medical personnel come on the plane after the passengers had deplaned. On arrival into KCHS, the Captain also radioed Station Operations to ensure the dispatch message had been received. Medical personnel were waiting at the gate when we arrived and tended to the injured Flight Attendant once passengers were fully deplaned.

Cabin Crew

Flight Attendant 'A'

I did not witness the event. I was made aware because of a phone call between crew approximately 39 minutes prior to landing (the flight was 2hr 57 min in duration). My "C" F/A relayed the "D" F/A said she splashed/ spilled coffee on herself.

Flight Attendant 'B'

D FA claimed she was thrown in turbulence causing burns so terrible she couldn't see or function. I did not witness it nor did I see any burns whatsoever after inspecting her with a flashlight along with the C FA. We encouraged her to get some burn cream upon landing as she was fine doing her doors and sitting on the jump seat while performing duties after the claims of being burned. It was not a full flight so she could have sat in an empty row if she was bad enough to not do her duties. The CA had pre warned us it might be bumpy off and on and to not do service/ stay seated if it became bumpy at any point. We had smooth air so we easily whipped out a service and then had lots of sit time while it was turbulent. From what I recall CA had us take our seats during the time of the "incident". I was shocked to find out EMS was meeting the aircraft let alone that she had left to the ER as it wasn't anything to even open the medical kit for.

Flight Attendant 'C'

The D said as she took the coffee pot out from the holder her hand hit the side and hot coffee splashed on her forehead and eyelids and the only reason it didn't get her eyeballs was because of her glasses. I was C and went back to check on her and put cold wet C folds on the areas she said hurt. I did not see any redness or blisters at all only her saying it felt like it was burning. I have burned my skin with hot water so badly it burned and blistered immediately so was concerned when she said she had burned herself and was relieved she didn't have that. The B also looked at her scalp with her flashlight and couldn't see anything. None of the other FAs realized she had been hurt until the captain called us and she mentioned she had burned herself. This was when we were getting very close to final descent. We weren't completely full so were able to get service done quickly. I took my regular rows so the back of the cabin had less people to serve.

Flight Attendant 'D'

I brewed a fresh of hot coffee for passenger. After coffee finished brewing. I picked up coffee pot up by its handle to pour a cup. That's when turbulence struck causing me to jerk my body hitting the fresh pot of hot coffee against the assist handle near coffee machine causing 1/2 pot of hot coffee to splash on me. Which also, caused a jerk reaction to my body again. The coffee caused burn to front of my head, scalp, forehead, both brow bone and both eyelids

Flight Attendant B asked me was I okay. As she seen what happened. I advised captain of what happened. He advised me paramedics will be at the airport when we land, Flight Attendant C rushed to the back gallery to administer cold compress.

Thank you,

Patrick Pettila
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