

**National Transportation Safety Board  
Office of Aviation Safety  
Washington, DC**

**Survival Factors Division**

**Flight attendant interviews**  
(9 pages)

Southwest Airlines (SWA) flight 345  
LaGuardia Airport, Flushing, NY  
July 22, 2013  
1740 eastern daylight time  
Boeing 737-700, N753SW

## Flight Attendant (FA) Interviews

*Interview:* Tammy Akers, flight attendant B  
*Date:* August 14, 2013  
*Time:* ~ 10:00 central daylight time (CDT)  
*Location:* SWA Headquarters, Dallas, TX

Present: Mark George (NTSB); Brent Harper, (SWA); Michael Massoni (Transport Workers Union Local 556); Dane Jaques (McKenna, Long, and Aldridge); David Tew (NTSB) was not present, but listening by telephone.

Ms. Akers indicated that Mr. Dane Jaques would represent her for the interview. Ms. Akers had worked as a FA for SWA for 23 ½ years. She was 50 years old at the time of the accident. She had never flown with either the captain or first officer (FO) before, and had no prior acquaintance or knowledge of them. Her duty position as “B” FA was on the aft jumpseat, and normally, she would not have had pre-flight contact with the flight crew. However, on this flight, there was a gate hold, so she used the extra time to introduce herself to the pilots. The captain and FO were in a “normal” mood. The captain mentioned that the flight may be “bumpy” on the way to LaGuardia.

This was to be her fourth leg on this airplane, and she did not notice anything unusual about the airplane on the accident flight, or the previous flights. Nor, was there anything unusual about the accident approach.

Toward the end of the flight, the captain called the FAs and told them to “clean up” early, due to possible turbulence. It was “a little bumpy.” She took her seat on the aft jumpseat.<sup>1</sup> During landing, she was in the “brace” position, and was turned slightly, looking out the porthole window. The landing was “very hard” – an “impact.” It was the most severe landing she had ever experienced. She was thrown forward and down, and then forward again. Her shoulder restraints did not lock. She was “dazed” after the impact, but regained her bearings. She did not have time to tell the passengers to brace for impact. There were two impacts – “bam...bam.”

She saw passengers getting up, so she stood up, and went forward. She noticed there was a ceiling panel down in the mid cabin, and one set of oxygen masks had deployed on the right side in the back. The passengers under the masks were grabbing at them, so she told them not to pull on the masks. She saw smoke outside the left side of the airplane, and “trash and stuff” all over the floor. Ms. Akers told the passengers to sit down, and then a female voice, which she believed was the captain, came over the public address (PA) system and told passengers to “please remain seated.” The passengers complied, and began sitting back down.

She went aft to her interphone and made a PA announcement to the passengers, and believed she had said, “Please remain seated; we’re not there yet.” She then tried twice to call FAs “A” and

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<sup>1</sup> Ms. Akers noted that the aft jumpseat was a double-occupancy seat, forward-facing, mounted on the aft bulkhead, right side, and that she was seated on the inboard seat, per SWA procedures.

“C” in the front of the airplane on the interphone. Nobody answered, but, through the handset she heard FA “A” tell FA “C” to open the 1R galley exit because of smoke in the cabin. There was no smoke at the rear of the airplane, but there was a “burning smell - like brakes.” Ms. Akers believed that what she overheard on the interphone was the initiation of an evacuation, so she assessed conditions outside, saw no smoke, and then opened the aft, right (2R) door. The door was “easy” to open, and the slide inflated normally.

She didn’t yell commands to the passengers because she thought it might cause them to panic, and the evacuation was proceeding smoothly with spoken instructions. At first, she told the passengers to cross their arms and jump into the slide, but after the first two, she noticed how steep the slide was, so told the remaining passengers to “sit and slide.” It didn’t seem appropriate to jump, with the slide so steep. She told the passengers to “come this way, this way out, leave everything.” She told them to bring “purses and small bags,” which was “not Southwest policy.” The passengers seemed calm, courteous, and were thanking her. She noticed that both overwing exit windows were open, but did not see anyone on the wing. She thought they might have been opened because of smoke in the cabin.

After the last passenger evacuated from Ms. Akers’ exit, she began moving forward in the cabin, and met an officer (police or fire – she was not sure) coming aft at the overwing exit. He told her to get out of the airplane, so she returned to the aft, right door, sat, and slid down the slide. She walked toward the passengers and tried to keep them together. A passenger who was deaf approached her and showed her a scrape on his arm. Another passenger helped communicate with the passenger and told him his arm would be treated at the terminal. Many passengers were “filming” the airplane.

Ms. Akers saw FA “A” and “C” come down the forward, right slide. She asked them if they were OK, and one was crying, but Ms. Akers did not see any obvious trauma. She did not ask them what had happened.

The captain was standing at the edge of the grass and Ms. Akers walked over and hugged her. The captain was in “some pain” and seemed to be “in shock.” Ms. Akers offered her cell phone to the captain to call her family, but, the captain did not want it. The FO was standing 4-5 feet away, and did not look injured; he seemed dazed. Ms. Akers also offered her cell phone to the FO, and he said he did not need it. Buses were there and police were loading and counting passengers. Ms. Akers knew there had been a cockpit jumpseat rider on the airplane, but did not see him on the ground.

Ms. Akers believed that the use of “sit and slide” instead of “jump and slide” prevented a lot of injuries. She said that even if there had been fire and smoke present, she still would have had the passengers sit down before going down the slide, although she would have increased the urgency of her commands. She did not open the aft, left exit because she saw smoke outside the left side of the airplane soon after the airplane stopped. Ms. Akers thought the evacuation had not been perfect, but still went well. She commented that FAs must be able to adapt to changing situations, and that some situations are not exactly like training.

Ms. Akers stated that FAs at SWA have the authority to initiate an evacuation without consulting the captain, if they feel it is necessary due to a dangerous situation.

She did not notice how much time passed before the fire department arrived, but she remembered seeing police at the bottom of her slide when she started the evacuation.

After the airplane stopped moving, Ms. Akers did not notice that the attitude of the airplane was different than normal.

She did not turn on the emergency lights after the accident, and did not notice if they were on during the evacuation; it was light outside, and she could see within the cabin.

All the galley compartments were double-latched prior to landing, but she found an orange juice can on the galley floor by the door. She was not sure where it came from.

Ms. Akers and the rest of the crew were taken to a hospital following the accident. Ms. Akers' back and neck were strained in the accident, and she had recurring pain in those areas, and trouble sleeping. She had not had an MRI at the time of the interview.

*Interview:* Kelly Shryne, flight attendant C  
*Date:* August 14, 2013  
*Time:* ~ 1130 CDT  
*Location:* SWA Headquarters, Dallas, TX

Present: Mark George (NTSB); Brent Harper, (SWA); Michael Massoni (Transport Workers Union Local 556); Dane Jaques (McKenna, Long, and Aldridge); David Tew (NTSB) was not present, but listening by telephone.

Ms. Shryne indicated that Dane Jaques would represent her for the interview. Ms. Shryne was 50 years old at the time of the accident. She had worked for SWA for 14 years; twelve years in reservations, and two years as a FA. She was seated on the forward jumpseat, inboard, and her evacuation responsibility was the 1R galley door.

Before the flight, she briefly talked to the captain about potential weather during the flight. She said “hello” to the FO, but did not “formally” meet him. She did not remember much about the meeting with the flight crew because she had flown with multiple crews that day. The accident flight was her 4<sup>th</sup> leg of the day. She did not think she had ever flown with either pilot before, nor did she have any prior acquaintance or knowledge of them.

Ms. Shryne did not notice anything unusual about the airplane or the flight prior to landing. There was some turbulence, but nothing abnormal. The airplane landed “abruptly and hard.” The forward left (1L) door opened “around 7 inches.” She did not see it open, but “heard something” and looked over. There was a lot of noise; screeching, scraping, sparks, and some smoke coming from the direction of the open door. She noticed that the slide was still in its container on the door, and the girt bar was engaged.

Passengers began standing up and moving forward before the airplane came to a stop. Ms. Shryne asked the passengers to remain seated. The passengers seemed “stunned,” but they were looking to her for direction. The forward cabin began filling with smoke. Ms. Shryne and FA “A” got up from the jumpseat, and FA “A” used the interphone to call the cockpit. FA “A” told Ms. Shryne that nobody was answering the phone. The cockpit door was still closed. She looked through the window on the forward galley door and saw firefighters with hoses outside. The window had liquid on it, and it was difficult to see out.

Ms. Shryne and FA “A” decided to vent the smoke. They were afraid to touch the 1L door because it was partially opened, so Ms. Shryne disarmed the 1R slide, and opened the door. A firefighter with a hose told her to shut the door, and that she could open it again “in a minute.” She closed and re-armed the slide. She did not see any flames while the door was open, but she saw water from hoses being sprayed on the airplane. The cockpit door opened, but she did not see the pilots. The smoke was getting worse, and the passengers were agitated and moving forward, so Ms. Shryne handed out wet paper towels to the passengers to calm them down.

She did not know who made the decision, but Ms. Shryne and FA “A” decided to evacuate the airplane. Ms. Shryne opened the 1R door and a firefighter gave her a “thumbs-up” signal. The

escape slide inflated and struck a firefighter outside. Ms. Shryne looked into the cockpit and saw the two pilots seated, but they didn't say anything. FA "A" began yelling commands to the passengers. Ms. Shryne told the passengers to "cross their arms, sit, and slide" to go down the slide. Ms. Shryne noted that the direction to "sit and slide" was an option they were taught to do. The passengers seemed "stunned," and a number of them did not follow directions. Some passengers seemed to be "in a dream," but others followed her commands. In some cases, she had to "physically put passengers on the slide." She thought that the slide "worked well." There was a jumpseat rider in the cockpit that came out. She did not see him evacuate, but she thought that it probably happened early in the evacuation.

One female passenger approached the door with her bags and didn't want to leave them. The woman was around 60 years old, tiny, and was adamant about taking her bags. Ms. Shryne took her bags from her, and threw them to the police on the ground. The heads of the people on the ground outside the airplane were at threshold level, and Ms. Shryne did not know why the airplane was so low. Ms. Shryne had "no idea" how many passengers used her exit.

After the passengers were off the airplane, FA "A" walked aft in the cabin. Ms. Shryne noticed that the captain was there, too, so, she must have come out of the cockpit during the evacuation. FA "A" and the captain walked aft. Ms. Shryne remembered "someone" told her to get off the airplane, and she vaguely remembered it was someone in uniform, such as a firefighter or police officer. She went down the 1R slide. She saw the FO outside the airplane, as well as a lot of rescue workers, including fire, police, and SWA personnel. The rescue workers were attending passengers, loading buses, and checking for injuries. Ms. Shryne saw one passenger with a scuffed elbow. Ms. Shryne's injuries were "soreness, pains, and strains" due to the "jolt" upon landing, and assisting passengers on the slide.

She found the crew standing together in a little group. Everyone was asking each other "how they were," but there was not a lot of talking. The captain was interested in the crew's condition, but the FO did not talk at all. The conversation was about injuries - not about the accident.

Ms. Shryne added that the cockpit jumpseater may have been the one that suggested the galley door be opened for ventilation, she was not sure. She also said that she remembered FA "A" and FA "B" giving instructions to the passengers over the PA system prior to the evacuation. She did not see an emergency lights after landing. Ms. Shryne also noted that her seat and restraint were "sturdy, and worked well."

*Interview:* Concepcion Rosas, flight attendant A  
*Date:* August 14, 2013  
*Time:* ~ 1345 CDT  
*Location:* SWA Headquarters, Dallas, TX

Present: Mark George (NTSB); Brent Harper, (SWA); Michael Massoni (Transport Workers Union Local 556); Dane Jaques (McKenna, Long, and Aldridge).

The interview began at about 1345.

Ms. Rosas indicated that Dane Jaques would represent her for the interview. She was 47 years old at the time of the accident, had worked for SWA for 5 years as a customer service agent, and had transitioned to FA three months prior to the accident. Ms. Rosas had never flown with the captain or FO prior to the accident, and had no prior acquaintance or knowledge of them.

Ms. Rosas was seated on the forward jumpseat, in the outboard position, and was responsible for operation of the 1L door. Prior to the flight, the captain came onboard, introduced herself to Ms. Rosas, and discussed the weather and the flight delay out of Nashville. The FO came onboard, introduced himself, and then went into the cockpit without conversation.

Ms. Rosas had flown on the accident airplane for three legs prior to the accident flight, and noted nothing unusual about the airplane on the previous legs. She also noted nothing unusual about the accident flight, including the approach.

During final approach, Ms. Rosas sat in her jumpseat and did a “30-second review.” She and FA “C” noticed a deaf passenger with a cell phone, videotaping out the window. Ms. Rosas decided to not say anything to the passenger, since she wouldn’t have been able to hear her. The landing was the hardest she had ever experienced, and just “took her breath away.” The 1L boarding door popped open, and she heard extremely loud engine, wind, and metal-scraping noises. It felt like the nose of the airplane was down, and the scraping noise was so loud that she and FA “C” could not hear each other. The door was open “about 10 inches” and she could see outside through the gap. The loud noises continued until the airplane stopped. Ms. Rosas noted that the slide in the 1L door was still armed and had not come out of the door. She thought that the slide might inflate if was jostled, so she never touched the door again.

Ms. Rosas said that both she and FA “C” were “in shock,” and “stunned.” She picked up the interphone and called the flight deck. The call was not answered. The passengers were excited, and wanted to get out of the airplane. Ms. Rosas told them she was “waiting for instructions from the pilots.” The passengers calmed down after she talked to them. Ms. Rosas again called the cockpit, and the captain finally answered. She asked the captain if they should evacuate the passengers, and the captain said, “no – remain seated.” Ms. Rosas told the captain that the airplane was filling up with smoke, and they needed to evacuate. The captain said, “OK, evacuate.” Ms. Rosas asked the captain which doors to use for the evacuation, and the captain did not answer.

Right then, the flight deck door opened, and an American Airlines (AAL) pilot (who was riding in the cockpit jumpseat) came out. Ms. Rosas asked the AAL pilot which doors to use for the evacuation. The AAL pilot leaned back into the cockpit to ask the captain. Ms. Rosas told FA “C” to disarm the 1R door and open it to dissipate the smoke. She did. There was a fireman outside the airplane that told FA “C” to close the door because there was fire in the area. FA “C” closed the door and re-armed the slide. Ms. Rosas heard water/foam hitting the airplane from outside. The AAL pilot was talking to the captain about evacuating but Ms. Rosas could not hear what was being said. The AAL pilot then told them to open the door.

Ms. Rosas made a PA announcement that told FA “B” to open the aft, right door. FA “C” opened the forward right door slightly, and yelled to the firefighters outside that she was about to open the door. FA “C” pushed on the door but it didn’t open. Ms. Rosas told her to push harder and it opened on the second try. The door seemed “slow,” but the slide finally deployed and inflated.

Ms. Rosas and FA “C” yelled to passengers to “leave everything.” A deaf passenger was scared, and was curled up on the floor. Ms. Rosas picked her up and put her on the slide. The deaf passenger was the first passenger to evacuate the airplane. Another passenger with disabilities was the second or third person to get off. She was escorting two little girls who went with her. The passengers lined up in an orderly manner, and they were again reminded by the FAs to “leave everything.” Ms. Rosas did not specifically remember when the AAL pilot evacuated, but though it was “pretty quick.” During the evacuation, Ms. Rosas had no interaction with the pilots, but she did notice that they were standing near the flight deck door and lavatory during the evacuation. At some point, before all the passengers were off the airplane, the FO evacuated.

Ms. Rosas thought the evacuation went “really quick.” Also, passengers listened to her when she told them to leave their bags, and that caused the evacuation to go faster. When all the passengers were off of the airplane, the captain told Ms. Rosas to “go.” Before she left the airplane, Ms. Rosas ran all the way to the aft galley of the airplane looking for passengers. She came back to the front of the airplane and went down the slide, following FA “C.” After Ms. Rosas evacuated, the captain went down the slide. At that point, no one else was on the airplane; she did not remember seeing any police or firefighters on the airplane.

On the ground outside the airplane, rescue workers were directing passengers to buses. Ms. Rosas located the crew. The captain and FO looked “shocked.” Ms. Rosas asked the captain if she was OK. The captain said that she was OK and asked Ms. Rosas the same question. Ms. Rosas asked the FO if he was OK. He nodded but didn’t talk. The crew’s conversation consisted of asking each other about injuries; there was no pertinent conversation about the accident.

Ms. Rosas sustained a “whiplash” injury as a result of the accident, and had persistent severe headaches. At the time of this interview, she was visiting a doctor once a week, attending physical therapy, and also a “therapist.”

Ms. Rosas said that SWA policy allows FAs to initiate an evacuation without talking to the pilots, if the conditions are “really bad.” When asked if she would have done anything differently



following the accident, Ms. Rosas said, “no.” When asked if any changes to SWA training would have helped in this situation, Ms. Rosas suggested that “the 30-second review needs to be stressed, and “to keep your seat belt fastened snugly.”

Ms. Rosas did not notice if the AAL pilot had a suitcase.