

Delta Airlines
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**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

ATTACHMENT 5

PASSENGER STATEMENT

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“This is my recollection of what happened on Thursday, March 5 when I flew on flight DL1086 from ATL to LGA and skid off the runway. I am certain some of the details aren’t quite right, some memories are a blur.

I was on the plane in Atlanta when my brother called to tell me it was dumping snow in NYC. He was there already for a business trip and we had planned to meet up that evening. His warning did nothing to make me think twice about my flight.

I was seated in 33A, a window seat of an emergency row over the left wing. The plane’s seat configuration has 3 seats on the left and two on the right. But this particular seat has plenty of leg room as there are only 2 seats in row 32. I had seen this on the seating chart and chosen it specifically for this purpose.

Our flight was completely normal. The departure was delayed and the Wi-Fi was slow. There was an empty seat between myself and the gentleman on the aisle.

As we approached for our landing you could see it was pretty nasty conditions. As an all-too-frequent-flyer, I wasn’t the least bit nervous about this landing. I have flown on more than 40 transatlantic flights, including one from Hong Kong to New York that lost two engines and had to make an emergency landing in Vancouver. I have been on a flight where a guy died. I even had a full Bloody Mary spill in my lap before takeoff from Singapore to New York, an 19 hour flight. So a snowy day wasn’t something that concerned me.

As we broke through the ‘frozen mist’ and clouds, it was completely blanketed in a fresh coat of white. So striking, I took out my phone to take a picture. I was a bit tardy, and ended up taking a picture of the landing as the runway was also completely white. The only way you could see where we were supposed to land was the darkness that was Flushing Bay.

It was all good until we touched down. There is a split second on every landing when you veer ever so slightly to one side or the other. Up to this moment in my life, we always recover quickly, straighten out and bring the plane to a controlled pace before beginning our taxi to the gate. I’ve done it a thousand times.

But this time was different.

Because there is no seat in front of me, I am facing a flight attendant, who doesn’t have a window of her own. Other than when she took us through the checklist informing us we were seated in the emergency exit row, I shared no interactions with her.

Back to touchdown.

That split second when you veer ever-so-slightly was not as ‘so-slightly’ this time. I remember hearing the reverse thrusters screaming in vain to slow us down. But it felt like when you brake too hard on a wet day in the car and begin to hydroplane. There is nothing you are going to be able to do to stop what has been set in motion. You hold your breath and hang on tight for whatever fate you are about to be dealt.

And that’s precisely what happened. Other than the reverse thrusters, it was eerily quiet. Everyone held their collective breath.

Because the flight attendant in front of me didn’t have a window, I tried to give her a play by play of what I was seeing.

I remember telling her we were sliding left, that our wing was getting close to the fence. That we were going to hit the fence.

The wing struck the fence. This is a chain link fence that more closely resembles one found in a prison than your backyard. Substantial square metal posts every few feet were being destroyed by our wing as if they were blades of grass and our wing, the lawn mower blade.

At some point, I remember the reverse thrusters being turned off and the silence it left in their absence was nerve wracking. Subconsciously it felt as if we had given up, that resistance was futile.

We could feel the plane sliding across the runway across the ice and snow. It wasn’t violent, but there was a complete certainty that we were in a very dangerous situation.

As we sped towards the edge of the runway, closer and closer to Flushing Bay, I remember thinking that there was nothing I could do about anything that was about to happen. As we started to slow, I remember thinking two things.

One was the fear that we were going to hit a fixture of some sort. In my mind, I imagined a large cement block with a light post above it being positioned along the fence. I pictured our wing hitting it and throwing us left into the bay.

The second thing I thought, and in hindsight quite proud to have thought, I had a sense of calm. I didn’t see my life flash before me, nor was I overcome with fear. I simply remember thinking: This is bad. I have no idea what is about to happen, but I will deal with whatever that is once we are presented with our circumstances.

I don’t think this is something unique to me. I would like to think this is a human capability we

all share. Some inherent mechanism we all have at our disposal when we need it most, an evolutionary gift from our forefathers millions of years before us.

It was probably only once we were safe that I had the opportunity to run through some of the options I might have faced had things gone differently. There were children behind me – what if we had plunged into the freezing water? How long would I be able to survive before my muscles would stop cooperating with my brain? If safety is forward and there are children behind me, what would I do? What should I do? What can I do?

These ‘what if’ scenarios were every bit as disturbing as the time we were careening out of control on the runway.

Eventually we came to a rest. We twisted slightly to our left, facing the water. From my seat, even with the windows caked with ice and snow, I could tell that water wasn’t an imminent threat, but for those at the front of the plane, it must have been terrifying to look down below and see nothing but Flushing Bay.

I still had my phone in my hand. I took it off airplane mode and quickly called my wife to let her know what had happened. I must have freaked her out, because I quietly told her that my plane had just crashed, but I was okay. I told her that she was going to hear about it on the news, but to know that we were unharmed. I explained that we needed to get off the plane and I would call her back.

My next move was to jump on social media to announce what just happened. In hindsight, I wish this hadn’t been my reflex, but in this social-first world in which I live, that was my instinct. I did factor in that no one seemed to be injured too seriously from where I was sitting. I immediately went onto Facebook and wrote “Just in a airplane crash!!!!!! Holy shit. All ok but holy shit”

It was a genuine mix of confusion and exuberance. Maybe that’s why it was so quiet, maybe we were all yelling on social media. Lots of caps, lots of explanation marks being hurled from that plane into cyberspace. But the plane was almost too quiet.

I’m not sure how long we sat there before we were evacuated. A few minutes perhaps. It was surprisingly calm and normal. One funny moment, in hindsight at least, occurred when a flight attendant opened the rear emergency exit under the tail. The fire trucks had arrived and were spraying the plane, presumably with fire suppressant, due to the fuel leak in the wing. But the flight attendant obviously on edge, opens the door and gets blasted with this fire hose. She slams the door shut having misinterpreted the fire hose as water from Flushing Bay.

She literally thinks there is a tsunami coming from the bay. She gets on the bullhorn and

frantically barks orders for everyone to move to the front of the plane declaring “There is water in the rear.”

Fortunately, I could see what was happening and told her the fire trucks were making their way around to my side of the plane and it should now be safe to open the door once again. She did so. It was now safe and dry.

This is the door I exited from. We were instructed to leave all our belongings on the plane. Only allowing us to take our jackets with us. The gentleman next to me asked if I planned to take my computer bag. We agreed we should take our computers, but leave our overhead luggage. I felt slightly guilty about this, but kind of knew I wasn't going to see my luggage anytime soon.

The inflatable slides meant to lead us to safety did not deploy properly, I could see one lying out the window on my side of the plane. So instead of getting to slide down the back, one of the few perks to a crash landing, firemen in silver, flame retardant suits helped us to the tarmac.

It felt like we had landed on another planet. Blizzard conditions. Many of inches of snow had drifted or been dragged to this spot of the tarmac. The expansive space of an airport added to the disorientating nature of the moment. Not to mention the dozens of police, fire rescue, ambulances, and other vehicles racing towards our direction.

My heart was racing. Nothing felt real. But we were all in one piece. Shaken, but safe.

In the few minutes we had between coming to a rest and being removed from the aircraft, I managed to film a few moments. I posted the film of us coming off the plane to my Facebook page. Within minutes I was getting requests from reporters to do interviews and use the footage. I had no interest in talking to anyone in the press. I didn't want to be that guy. I certainly didn't feel like I had my wits about me to describe what we had just gone through. So I allowed anyone that asked to use the footage.

We were herded onto buses and taken to the terminal where we they had cleared the Delta Sky Lounge for the passengers of DL1086. Once in the lounge, there was a common request I heard from multiple passengers. “I need a drink.”

But clearly there is a protocol for these kinds of situation and apparently action item number one is to remove all alcohol from the premises. It was a blaring omission. But I understand this decision, probably a wise choice.

As I started getting comments on my Facebook post, a friend mentioned that Larry Donnell, the

NY Giants Tight End was also on the flight. I turned around and saw him. I went over and shook his hand. He too had been Tweeting about what had just transpired.

We were held in this lounge for a couple of hours I would think. It was probably necessary to unwind a bit. We filled out paperwork, describe our luggage and where we wanted it sent, people were able to be checked by medics if there were injuries, we all connected to our loved ones to let them know what had just happened. The televisions in the lounge were tuned to CNN and we were watching the footage of our plane as it became the lead story.

Surreal.

We eventually were able to leave. Not before being questioned by police detectives. I remember mentioning the reverse thrusters to the officer. I also remember telling a Delta employee, who were all very concerned and nice, that I was going to get drunk and go shopping for clothes... in that order. If Delta looked after their passengers like they do after you crash, they would be the best airline in the world.”