

**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
OFFICE OF AVIATION SAFETY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

August 1, 2012

**SURVIVAL FACTORS SPECIALIST REPORT**

**A. Accident** : **DCA12FA062**

LOCATION : Buena Vista, Colorado  
DATE : April 15, 2012  
TIME : ~2349 central daylight time (cdt)  
AIRCRAFT : Airbus 319-132, N808AW  
OPERATOR : US Airways

**B. Survival Factors Group:** None formed

**C. Summary**

On 15 April 2012, at approximately 2349 local time, an Airbus Industries A319-132, US registration N808AW, s/n 1088, operated by US Airways as flight 496 from PHX to DEN, encountered severe mountain wave turbulence at flight level 320 in the vicinity of Buena Vista, CO. Two flight attendants were injured during the encounter. There were no pilot reports (PIREPS) of turbulence in the area prior to the encounter. The flight continued to DEN, and landed normally. There was no damage to the aircraft.

**D. Details of the Investigation**



The survival factors specialist was asked to collect and review cabin crew statements. The attached flight attendant statements were provided by US Airways. The following is a summary of the statements:

There were briefings from the flight crew of turbulence coming out of PHX. The flight attendants stayed seated for a 'little bit' after departure but the flight experienced little to no turbulence prior to event. The cabin was prepared, the flight attendants had completed their walk through trash service/compliance check and a final fasten seatbelt announcement was made. Shortly after being seated in their jumpseats waiting for final descent into DEN, at the top of the descent about 25 minutes prior to arrival at DEN, the airplane experienced "severe turbulence" and there was a "change in the pitch" of the airplane. Both flight attendants in the aft galley (positions B and C) were thrown from their jumpseats and hit their heads on the ceiling. The forward flight attendant (position A), who was able to remain in her jumpseat, went to the aft galley to assess the situation. The aft flight attendants were lying next to each other on the galley floor and a doctor was already attending to their injuries. The forward flight attendant returned to the forward galley, looking for any injured passengers along the way. There were two passengers who had also hit their heads. She notified the Captain of the injuries and the flight proceeded to DEN without further incident. None of the flight attendants had their seat belts fastened and two of the three flight attendants recall seeing the seatbelt sign illuminated at the time of the event.

NTSB  
490 L'Enfant Plaza, SW  
Washington, DC 20594

To whom it may concern,

Here is my account of the incident of Flight 496 on April 14th. PHX-DEN flight was uneventful with little to no turbulence. About 25 minutes before scheduled landing, I was sitting on my jumpseat in the forward galley. I thought the seat belt sign was off, since it was smooth air and we had not yet started our initial descent, but I have been told that the pilots said it was on. All of a sudden without any warning whatsoever, this came out of NO WHERE - - - BAM !! SEVERE TURBULENCE. The aircraft dipped side to side violently for about 10 seconds. I was not strapped in. I did not fall off my jumpseat - I grabbed the handle by the door to hold on. After the shaking stopped I sat in my jumpseat for about 20 - 30 more seconds - not knowing if I should get up or not at this point in case there were to be more turbulence. I quickly checked on my First Class passengers, and they were alright. I noticed a woman running back to the aft galley and knew something was wrong. When I arrived at the back of the aircraft - the woman, a doctor, was already attending to the 2 Flight Attendants who were laying side by side on the galley floor, and also there was a nurse attending to them also. The Flight Attendants were conscious but obviously in a lot of pain. They had been seated on the jumpseat, hit both their heads on the ceiling which made a huge crack/hole in the ceiling. Then they came crashing down on the floor, and I think he must have landed on her. The doctor and nurse did a phenomenal job in attending to these people. They assured me that they had the situation under control, and I should do what I needed to do at this point in order to prepare for our landing. I then went forward to call the Captain from my front phone because I wanted to quickly assess the cabin and passengers in order to tell the Captain. I called him and reported everything to him. He told me to secure the cabin for landing and he would call me back to verify that we were indeed ready for landing. At this point I walked through the cabin stopping at each row to make sure the passengers were safe. There were 2 passengers who hit their heads: one man on the ceiling and the other young man on the side wall making a big dent in the wall. I got a bag of ice for the one man, and the other younger gentleman said he did not need any ice or anything. I once again confirmed with the doctor and nurse that everything was stable for landing. They stayed seated on the floor next to the Flight Attendants for landing. The Captain called me and asked if the cabin was secure for landing and I assured him it was. I sat in my jumpseat, we landed. At the gate, the paramedics came on board immediately to assess the condition of the Flight Attendants. They determined that we could deplane the passengers, which we did, and then they carried both Flight Attendants on stretchers with neck braces on, off the aircraft. Paramedics attended to the man with the neck injury and he also went to the hospital. The younger man refused medical treatment.

  
Diane Ustrud  'A' position Written on April 18, 2012

April 19, 2012

NTSB  
490 L'Enfant Plaza, SW  
Washington, DC 20594

To whom it may concern,

Flt. 496 PHX- DEN

April 14, 2012

Cabin Crew: (A) Diane Ustrud, (B) Stephanie Freeman, (C) Thomas Gauthreaux

At the top of decent, just before final, I had completed a walk through trash service/compliance check. The seatbelt sign was on. There had been no concerns about the flight during the standard briefing. I sat next to Stephanie in the double rear facing jumpseat. The cabin was prepared. The passengers were in compliance and the seatbelt sign was on. We were waiting for the double ding indicating our final decent into Denver. Shortly after sitting down, I felt a rapid change in the pitch of the plane. The aircraft pointed down and there was an intense vibration and loud rumbling noise. It also felt like we were picking up speed. As the speed increased, it felt like the weight of my own body increased also. This sensation seemed to have lasted about five seconds. We then were catapulted up to the ceiling as if it were the floor. Our heads made a hole in the ceiling. Then within that same second, we smacked down on the floor. Having the wind knocked out of us, we could not move or communicate. There were medical professionals on board who assisted us until the paramedics arrived after landing in Denver. We were then rushed to the Denver hospital with multiple injuries.

Tom Gauthreaux



US Airways Flight Attendant


Wednesday 4/18/12 10:13a.m.

Stephanie Freeman statement regarding F496 14APR 2012 PHX/DEN Tail# 808 Equip. A319

Statement dictated by Stephanie Freeman, recorded by PHX Inflight Supervisor Mary Fosberg. In attendance were Stephanie, AFA EAP Representative Benjamin Gonzalez, and myself. On the phone via conference call was AFA Safety Chair Dauna Slater.

I, Stephanie Freeman am providing my statement below:

I was working the B FA position in the aft galley. There were turbulence communications coming out of PHX to stay seated. We were seated for a little bit, and that was all the turbulence prior to the event that I can remember. I just did the regular level off announcement, fasten seat belt sign. I made another fasten seat belt announcement at the top of descent to remain seated for the duration of the flight. Compliance checks were made after the "remain seated" announcement at the top of descent. The air was smooth while sitting in the jumpseat- it just came out of nowhere, there was no time to react. The Fasten Seat Belt sign was on.



Stephanie Freeman  
4/18/12