

Seat 16E
Female, age 32
Telephone interview by Mark George, NTSB

She was traveling with her three-year-old son¹ (in seat 16F), and she had her 6 month-old son sitting on her lap, facing forward. When she boarded, she had the 6 month-old child in a “sling carrier – like a backpack” and the flight attendant made her remove the child from the sling prior to takeoff. Her three year-old was sitting “normally” in the seat, and had the lap belt fastened around him “tightly.” As the airplane started rolling for takeoff, she and her older son did a “countdown” waiting for the airplane to lift off. All of a sudden, the airplane made an “extremely sharp” left turn, and continued off the runway. The ground was not smooth and the airplane did not slow down.

The airplane “hit a berm” and the child on her lap went up into the air and “floated” near the seat back in front of her. She thought he was going to go over the seat in front of her, so she reached up and “grabbed him back” to her lap. The airplane hit a second bump that was not as severe as the first – it was like a “gentle slope, up and down.” She was “surprised” that her baby came loose from her grasp, and she had not realized they were crashing until it happened. She thought she should have held onto the child tighter than she did, but she wasn’t expecting a crash.

The airplane stopped, and she could see a “ball of orange” out the right window. Her three year-old child had “turned completely around” in his seat and was facing his seat, with his feet on the floor. She unbuckled his seatbelt “easily,” but had a “hard time” getting her own seatbelt unfastened. People started evacuating the airplane. The passengers in the cabin exhibited a “calm chaos”- it was orderly at first and got more “frantic” later. She heard a passenger say, “Get off the airplane – it’s going to blow.” She did not see “exit lights” but she could see well enough to tell what the other passengers were doing. She saw some passengers “climbing over seats.”

She heard a passenger say “open the left exit, not the right exit,” or “something like that.” She saw that the closest exit to her was two rows forward on the left side. A female passenger in her row helped by assisting the three year-old child to the exit. The female passenger took the three year-old child to the left overwing exit. Passenger 16E carried her 6 month old child to the left overwing exit and went outside the airplane. A male passenger held her baby while she went through the exit. She “slid down the wing” and rejoined the female passenger with her three year-old child.

¹ According to Passenger 16E, her three year-old child weighed 28 – 32 lbs. at the time of the accident.

The passengers walked up a “big hill,” to a building that had an open door. It was a fire station, and she saw “two engines” there. She was still holding her 6 month-old son and she took him into a “living room.” She noticed that the child was “not responsive;” his eyes were closed and he was “just lying there.” She slapped his feet to try to wake him up, but was unsuccessful. By that time, paramedics had arrived, and she asked them to look at her son. The paramedics looked him over, and then told her that they needed to attend to “more severely injured passengers.” They also told her that she and her children “would be on the next ambulance.” The ambulance came “pretty quickly,” and she was taken to a hospital. Once they arrived at the hospital, a “pediatrics doctor” examined her 6 month-old son, and he “woke up.” The doctor had X-rays done on the child, and found “no trauma,” and “no obvious injuries.” Her three year-old had “bumps and bruises,” and passenger 16E had a “lower lumbar strain.”