

First Officer Statement

UA2498

Jan. 10, 2024

Dept. PHX-IAH

Position: Pilot Flying

I was the First Officer on United 2498 on Jan 10, 2024, from PHX to IAH, and acting as pilot flying. We descended into IAH on the DRLLR5 Arrival with two runway changes. I had briefed the possible runway change and associated threats with that occurring. As the runway change instructions were received, we followed through accordingly with appropriate briefing changes. We were ultimately assigned a visual approach to Runway 27, which I backed up with ILS guidance as a reference. The autopilot was disengaged around 1,000-foot MSL. We had a crosswind from the south. I do not recall the exact crosswind that was encountered during the landing, but I do recall that the winds encountered at 1,000 feet were 180 degrees at 25 knots.

The approach was stable all the way to the landing flare. I usually start my flare after hearing the 30 foot aural alert, with a little reduction on power and a full flare at 20 feet, then reduce the power to idle at 10 feet, which has consistently resulted in smooth landings in the touchdown zone. However, this time once we descended below 30 feet above the runway, I was somehow slow to act, and it was not until close to 20 feet above the runway before I started the flare. The airplane touched down hard on the runway, and bounced. I raised the nose and the Captain prompted me on the pitch (can't remember the exact wording) and I held the pitch. I was expecting the aircraft to touch down smoother, however, the spoiler opened and bled off energy, causing a second hard landing.

The first landing didn't appear to be as high as what has been demonstrated when I last was in the simulator, and the airplane wasn't carrying extra energy at this point as we crossed the runway threshold, so I felt it was safer to complete the landing.

At the time I thought it was just a hard landing and never thought we might have had a tail strike; however, I was planning for a postflight walk-around to check the landing gear. Both the Captain and I knew the bounced landing was due to my flare starting slightly late. Once we got to the gate, the ground crew advised us that we need to look at something on the airplane. The Captain and I separately walked outside and observed the damage.

Leading to this event, the last couple months, my schedule has been consistently operating late nights, and my body has been synced accordingly. As a result, it is normal for me to be awake for a couple hours past midnight. This trip started as usual, however it got modified on the second day. The long layover turned into a short layover with an early morning show. It would require reversing my established sleep pattern overnight. Even though the next morning I started feeling okay, it seems like by the end of flight, fatigue had caught up with me and it appears to have affected my performance.