

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Office of Aviation Safety
Washington, D.C. 20594

June 24, 2020

Attachment 2 – Cabin Crew Statements

OPERATIONAL FACTORS/HUMAN PERFORMANCE

DCA19LA134

AA #300/10APR19

A321 (#796)

JFK-LAX

Uncommanded Roll on Takeoff

Flight Attendant CERS Debriefs

#1 FA: [REDACTED]

On takeoff, as the nose lifted into the air, out of the blue, we felt the airplane lose control as it banked steeply to the right and then almost immediately steeply to the left. I was sitting in jump seat 1 L door side (position #1) and the #5 was seated next to me. We were tossed violently from side to side as the airplane felt like it was falling out of the sky uncontrollably. As we were slammed side to side I felt a specific instance where control of the plane was being regained. The pilots somehow managed to pull the nose up and continue the take off. Immediately after we cleared sterile we called to pilots and the captain gave us an indication that there had been a possible system malfunction and that it felt as if the "rudder had gotten stuck". He told us that we would take precaution and preventatively turn around and land at JFK. As we walked thru the cabin to do our security checks and verify that no one was hurt the passenger at 8A over the wing brought our attention to what appeared to be an abnormal looking left wing. When compared with the right wing we were able to detect differences and abnormalities. However because it was dark and nighttime we were unable to see the gravity of the damage. We immediately let the captain know. At this point we were already set to land and that was all we could do at that time. We asked the captain if we should prepare for an emergency landing but because he had no indications of anything wrong in the flight deck he advised us there was no need. However, the number 4 advised he briefed his exits preventively and we delivered the "prepare for landing" PA and thoroughly performed our safety walk through. In all the time in-flight no one was crying, or hysterical, yelling, or visibly upset. In fact as I walked through only 3 people asked about what happened and the safety of the airplane- one being 8A as he brought our attention to the damaged left wing. Upon descent I went over my 30 second review and acknowledged the possibility of an abnormal landing and was mentally prepared to start shouting commands and evacuating if need be. As a crew we had discussed that before we took our jump seat. Thankfully we landed an excellent landing and no one was injured. The gravity of the incident and the damage to the wing was only seen upon landing. After arriving safely to the gate I personally stood at the front door and said goodbye to each passenger individually and instructed them to gate 35- the next departure gate that had been advised to me. Not one passenger came off crying and no one complained of injury. In fact, a large majority of the passenger peaked their head into the cockpit profusely thanking the captain, saying "great job" and "God bless you". Many walked off commenting on what a great landing it was and that they were thankful and happy to be safely on the ground. It was not until we walked off that we were able to see the gaping hole of the wing and were informed by maintenance of the large scrape on the underside and that the wing was bent. As we walked off I immediately felt the effects of the whiplash experienced during the planes uncontrolled falling. Back pain was acute and I was not able to sleep well due to the pain that night. Flight service met us as we deplaned and we were taken to ops and taken care of. All in all, our near death experience was terrifying and I am personally so grateful for our excellent pilots who were able to regain control of the aircraft, continue our take off, and land us safely once again. They are heroes. What could have been a deadly accident turned into only a terrifying emergency with a positive outcome.

#2 FA: [REDACTED]

Shortly after takeoff A/C whipped to the right and very quickly whipped to the left. I looked out 4L and saw a flash of light. We remained strapped in our jump seat for a few minutes. The captain made a P.A. and said they were checking the instruments on the A/C. He also said the A/C was flying fine but as a precaution we were returning to JFK. We prepared the cabin for arrival. I saw no injuries and no one said they were injured in the cabin. Sat in my jump seat and did a 30 second review. Landed in JFK and taxied to the gate.

#3 FA: [REDACTED]

I was not involved in the actual damage to the aircraft wing. Upon taxi and take off there was no indication to me that the wing had been damaged. I did not hear, see, smell, or feel any impact forces. There was significant abnormal aircraft altitude and attitude adjustments as the plane began to take off, resulting in severe fluctuations from side to side in an attempt to level off and accelerate to airborne status. Once the aircraft leveled off, we were advised by the pilots that they were reviewing the instruments of the aircraft for malfunctions. They decided to use precaution and return to the JFK airport for mechanical inspection. At this time we were unaware of wing damage. About 10 minutes before landing pax 8A advised the crew he noticed a dent in the wing. Upon inspection, crew was able to determine there was in fact physical damage to the wing, by comparing the view of undamaged wing from 8F to the view of damaged wing from 8A. Pilots were advised of the damage via interphone and flight crew prepared for landing. Pilots landed the aircraft safely without further incident.

No passengers or crew members reported witnessing wing damage occurring at the time of takeoff. No passengers reported any physical injury to the crew. I was in jumpseat 2L facing aft. I experienced the aircraft tilt left, right, and then a hard left requiring me hold the wall in front of me to keep from whiplash in my seatbelt harness. Pilots were than able to recover the aircraft to normal attitude and altitude without further incident.

#4 FA: [REDACTED] (CERS Debrief & FA Statement provided by [REDACTED] are identical)

I was #4 on this flight with my jump seat being at 3R. The takeoff roll was completely normal. Once we lifted off the plane began to veer as if out of control. The attitude of the plane was very abnormal. The last veer was a very hard left with the wing dipping down and the impression that we were headed straight for the ground. The pilots managed to pull us out of it and we continued to climb normally. The captain made the decision to return to JFK. During the time we were heading back to JFK, a passenger in seat 8A pointed out to us that the left wing looked damaged. All of us crew members took a look and indeed the wing did look damaged. We relayed this information to the cockpit. Not knowing if we were going to have a normal landing due to the damaged wing, I briefed my passengers in row 11 on what to expect and what to do should we have to evacuate. The landing was completely normal. At no time during takeoff or during the short flight did any of us ever experience any unusual noises, impacts or smells and therefore we had no idea that the wing had been damaged nor could we tell at which point it was damaged. Our only indication was passenger in seat 8A who pointed it out to us.

#5 FA:

I was not involved in the actual wing damage of the aircraft. I was working position 5, sharing exits, 1L and 1R with the purser, both facing aft. Normal taxi, prepared for departure, rolling down runway, taking off.....it felt as if the airplane was pulling to one side. Airplane struggling going straight. Going too fast to abort takeoff. I am facing aft and my head is in the pursers lap, repeating omg we are going to die. I was waiting for impact to the ground, another plane or structure. As I knew we were not that high off the ground. I am not sure as to which direction the airplane wings were tilting at 45 degree ANGLES. Left, right, left OR right, left, right. Happened so fast, and my head was in pursers lap, eyes closed, thinking we were going to die. No scrapes, impact or noises were heard. Pilots got control of the aircraft. I called captain and asked what just happened. We were all freaked out back here. He mentioned the rudder might have been stuck. Captain mentioned he was checking instruments and too hold tight. As I walked back to the 4L and R to check on pax and crew, a BC pax stopped to tell/show me the LH side wing as damaged. I called captain and he said we r going back to the JFK and that he would make an announcement to the pax. At this point all the FAs were comparing both wings to confirm LH side was truly damaged. We landed at JFK w/o incident.

Pax thanked the crew and cockpit as the exited the airplane at the gate. Everyone relieved to be there safe. Pax did not report any injuries. Upon exit pax were photographing the damaged wing from the jet bridge.

#6 FA:

I was not involved in the actual damage to the aircraft wing. Upon taxi and takeoff I did not realize the wing had been damaged. I did NOT hear, smell or see anything related to the wing. When the plane took off, immediately the aircraft started to fluctuate and the plane made a sudden and quick dip to the right. I was in jumpseat 4R facing aft of the plane. As it did this the impact had my upper body perpendicular to the floor. The plane was then struggling to level off. We finally leveled off and were airborne. The pilot then got on the PA and told everyone we were going back to JFK. I was still unaware of any wing damage. I just knew something terribly went wrong. I got out of my jumpseat and went through main cabin to do a seatbelt check and I made it very clear to passengers that seatbelts need to be on along with seat backs and tray tables up. I then did a double check of galley-making sure everything was secure and I checked my door to see if anything at all was obstructing the door. I was preparing for an evacuation in my head. I then took my jumpseat and went over my commands in my head.

The pilot landed the plane successfully and we went to the gate. I disarmed my door and stood in last row of coach to see what was going on in cabin. I slowly walked up cabin and a male passenger sitting over left wing brought to my attention the damaged wing and he had videotaped it. . At this time mechanics were already down by wing. This was the first I had heard about any damage to wing. I just felt the extreme fluctuations of the plane and the plane dipping sideways to the right. I did not hear any screaming during incident, only applause when plane landed. No one mentioned anything about any injuries to me. The passengers deplaned and we were taken to JFK operations.