
APU fire and uncommanded evacuation, Boeing 727-227, April 19, 1998

Micro-summary: This Boeing 727-227 experienced a smoke emergency and uncommanded evacuation, which injured several people

Event Date: 1998-04-19 at 2030 CST


Investigative Body: National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), USA

Investigative Body's Web Site: <http://www.nts.gov/>

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		NTSB ID: CHI98LA127		Aircraft Registration Number: N722AA	
		Occurrence Date: 04/19/1998		Most Critical Injury: Serious	
		Occurrence Type: Accident		Investigated By: NTSB	
Location/Time					
Nearest City/Place CHICAGO	State IL	Zip Code 60666	Local Time 2030	Time Zone CST	
Airport Proximity: On Airport		Distance From Landing Facility:		Direction From Airport:	
Aircraft Information Summary					
Aircraft Manufacturer Boeing		Model/Series 727-227		Type of Aircraft Airplane	
Sightseeing Flight: No			Air Medical Transport Flight: No		
Narrative					
<p>Brief narrative statement of facts, conditions and circumstances pertinent to the accident/incident:</p> <p>On April 19, 1998, at 2030 central daylight time, a Boeing 727- 227, N722AA, operated as American Airlines Flight 1625, experienced an uncommanded passenger evacuation while parked at Gate L6 at the O'Hare International Airport, Chicago, Illinois. The three cockpit crewmembers and four flight attendants were not injured. One passenger suffered a serious injury, 2 passengers received minor injuries, and 146 passengers were not injured. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed and an IFR flight plan was filed. The airplane received minor damage when the over wing emergency exit hatch was thrown onto the top of the left wing during the evacuation. The 14 CFR Part 121 flight had a destination of Kansas City, Missouri.</p> <p>The cockpit crew was in the process of starting the Auxiliary Power Unit (APU) when passengers saw flames on the right side of the airplane. A passenger was heard to scream "fire" at which time the uncommanded evacuation was initiated by the passengers. Passengers exited the airplane via the left over wing exit(s), the rear airstair door, and the main entry door onto the jet bridge. In addition, at least one passenger exited the airplane through the L-2 door. A ten year old boy received a broken arm and two other passengers received minor leg and ankle injuries as they jumped off the wing.</p> <p>The captain reported that the APU "torched" as it was being started. He stated the passengers stampeded the doors, exiting the airplane through the aft airstairs and the over wing exits. The first officer reported hearing passengers yelling "fire" at which time he called for the fire equipment and assistance. He stated the captain then determined what the problem was and he attempted to calm the passengers down with an announcement over the public address system.</p> <p>The #1 flight attendant reported that she walked into the aisle and saw the passengers in the middle section of the airplane in "hysteria." She stated her first thought was that there was a fight onboard the airplane. She went into the cockpit and informed the flight crew that there was a problem. She reported she then looked back and saw passengers running toward the front of the airplane. She stated she ran onto the jet bridge to get out of the way. She reported, "I had no idea the people thought there was a fire and I had no idea the people were evacuating using the window exits and the aft stairs."</p> <p>The #2 flight attendant reported hearing someone yell "fire" during the boarding process. She stated she saw flames coming from the right engine and thought it was "torching." She stated she tried to explain the situation to the passengers, but no one listened. She reported the passengers were coming at her in the rear of the airplane so she opened the aft airstair and let them exit. She reported, "I honestly thought they [there] were [was] going to be a stampede." The #3 flight attendant reported she was near the cockpit door when she heard a "weird sound" and turned to see "half the aircraft passengers stampeding toward me." She reported hearing them yelling there was a fire. She reported she looked for signs of a fire and without seeing any she tried to slow the passengers down as they exited the jet bridge.</p>					
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National Transportation Safety Board

FACTUAL REPORT

AVIATION

NTSB ID: CHI98LA127


Occurrence Date: 04/19/1998


Occurrence Type: Accident

Narrative (Continued)

The #4 flight attendant who was in the back of the airplane reported hearing someone yell "fire" at which time she saw a flame coming out of the right engine. She reported the passengers panicked and started jumping out of their seats and running up the aisle. She reported that in order to avoid getting trampled she turned and went to the front of the airplane where she informed the captain of the flames. She then remained in the front of the airplane until all the passengers had exited the airplane. This flight attendant reported, "I must add that the passengers took over the aircraft and it was pure mayhem. It was a very frightening experience."

Questionnaires were mailed to the passengers on board flight 1625 as part of the NTSB Evacuation Safety Study. Some of the passengers reported the airplane was still being boarded when the evacuation occurred. The majority of passengers who responded to the questionnaire reported panic inside the airplane with the passengers pushing each other to get to an exit. Several passengers reported they went toward the front of the airplane and were redirected by a flight attendant to go out the back of the airplane. Of those who have responded to the questionnaire at the time of this report, 13 passengers reported that they exited the airplane via the overwing exit(s) on the left side of the airplane. Seven of these passengers reported they jumped off of the wing. The remaining six reported they stayed on the wing for a period of time prior to reentering the airplane and exiting through either the forward or aft exit doors. One passenger reported opening and exiting the airplane through the L-2 door. This passenger reported she was lowered out of the airplane by another passenger until she was at a point about seven feet off the ground at which time she jumped.

 National Transportation Safety Board FACTUAL REPORT AVIATION		NTSB ID: CHI98LA127				
		Occurrence Date: 04/19/1998				
		Occurrence Type: Accident				
Landing Facility/Approach Information						
Airport Name O'HARE INTERNATIONAL		Airport ID: ORD	Airport Elevation 668 Ft. MSL	Runway Used 0	Runway Length	Runway Width
Runway Surface Type:						
Runway Surface Condition:						
Type Instrument Approach:						
VFR Approach/Landing: None						
Aircraft Information						
Aircraft Manufacturer Boeing		Model/Series 727-227		Serial Number 20730		
Airworthiness Certificate(s): Transport						
Landing Gear Type: Retractable - Tricycle						
Homebuilt Aircraft? No		Number of Seats: 160	Certified Max Gross Wt. 142000 LBS		Number of Engines: 3	
Engine Type: Turbo Jet		Engine Manufacturer: P&W		Model/Series: JT8D-9	Rated Power: 14500 LBS	
- Aircraft Inspection Information						
Type of Last Inspection Continuous Airworthiness		Date of Last Inspection 04/1998	Time Since Last Inspection Hours		Airframe Total Time 3326 Hours	
- Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) Information						
ELT Installed? No		ELT Operated?		ELT Aided in Locating Accident Site?		
Owner/Operator Information						
Registered Aircraft Owner AMERICAN AIRLINES, INC.		Street Address P.O. BOX 61616				
		City DFW AIRPORT		State TX	Zip Code 75261	
Operator of Aircraft Same as Reg'd Aircraft Owner		Street Address Same as Reg'd Aircraft Owner				
		City		State	Zip Code	
Operator Does Business As: AMERICAN AIRLINES				Operator Designator Code: AALA		
- Type of U.S. Certificate(s) Held:						
Air Carrier Operating Certificate(s): Flag Carrier/Domestic						
Operating Certificate:			Operator Certificate:			
Regulation Flight Conducted Under: Part 121: Air Carrier						
Type of Flight Operation Conducted: Scheduled; Domestic; Passenger Only						

 <p>National Transportation Safety Board FACTUAL REPORT AVIATION</p>	NTSB ID: CHI98LA127
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	Occurrence Type: Accident

First Pilot Information

Name On File	City On File	State On File	Date of Birth On File	Age 44
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Sex: M	Seat Occupied: Left	Principal Profession: Civilian Pilot	Certificate Number: On File
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Certificate(s): Airline Transport; Flight Engineer

Airplane Rating(s): Multi-engine Land; Single-engine Land

Rotorcraft/Glider/LTA: None

Instrument Rating(s): Airplane

Instructor Rating(s): None

Type Rating/Endorsement for Accident/Incident Aircraft?	Current Biennial Flight Review?
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Medical Cert.: Class 1	Medical Cert. Status: Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Date of Last Medical Exam: 11/1997
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- Flight Time Matrix	All A/C	This Make and Model	Airplane Single Engine	Airplane Multi-Engine	Night	Instrument		Rotorcraft	Glider	Lighter Than Air
						Actual	Simulated			
Total Time										
Pilot In Command(PIC)										
Instructor										
Last 90 Days		148								
Last 30 Days		63								
Last 24 Hours		5								

Seatbelt Used? Yes	Shoulder Harness Used? Yes	Toxicology Performed? No	Second Pilot? Yes
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Flight Plan/Itinerary

Type of Flight Plan Filed: IFR

Departure Point Same as Accident/Incident Location	State	Airport Identifier ORD	Departure Time 0000	Time Zone
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Destination KANSAS CITY	State KS	Airport Identifier MKC	
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Type of Clearance: None

Type of Airspace: Class B

Weather Information

Source of Briefing: Company

Method of Briefing:

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Weather Information					
WOF ID	Observation Time	Time Zone	WOF Elevation	WOF Distance From Accident Site	Direction From Accident Site
ORD	2056	CST	668 Ft. MSL	0 NM	0 Deg. Mag.
Sky/Lowest Cloud Condition: Clear			0 Ft. AGL	Condition of Light: Dusk	
Lowest Ceiling: None		0 Ft. AGL		Visibility: 10 SM	Altimeter: 30.00 "Hg
Temperature: 13 °C	Dew Point: -2 °C	Wind Direction: 50		Density Altitude: Ft.	
Wind Speed: 5	Gusts:	Weather Conditions at Accident Site: Visual Conditions			
Visibility (RVR): 0 Ft.	Visibility (RVV) 0 SM	Intensity of Precipitation: Unknown			
Restrictions to Visibility: None					
Type of Precipitation: None					

Accident Information		
Aircraft Damage: Minor	Aircraft Fire: Ground	Aircraft Explosion: None

Classification: U.S. Registered/U.S. Soil					
- Injury Summary Matrix	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None	TOTAL
First Pilot				1	1
Second Pilot				1	1
Student Pilot					
Flight Instructor					
Check Pilot					
Flight Engineer				1	1
Cabin Attendants				4	4
Other Crew					
Passengers		1	2	146	149
- TOTAL ABOARD -		1	2	153	156
Other Ground	0	0	0		0
- GRAND TOTAL -	0	1	2	153	156

National Transportation Safety Board

FACTUAL REPORT

AVIATION



NTSB ID: CHI98LA127

Occurrence Date: 04/19/1998

Occurrence Type: Accident

Administrative Information

Investigator-In-Charge (IIC)

PAMELA S. SULLIVAN

Additional Persons Participating in This Accident/Incident Investigation:

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