
Rapid decompression, McDonnell Douglas MD-83, December 26, 2005

Micro-summary: This McDonnell Douglas MD-83 experienced a rapid cabin decompression on climb.


Event Date: 2005-12-26 at 1635 PST


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


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

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		NTSB ID: SEA06LA033		Aircraft Registration Number: N979AS	
		Occurrence Date: 12/26/2005		Most Critical Injury: None	
		Occurrence Type: Accident		Investigated By: NTSB	
Location/Time					
Nearest City/Place Seattle		State WA	Zip Code 98188	Local Time 1635	Time Zone PST
Airport Proximity: On Airport		Distance From Landing Facility:		Direction From Airport:	
Aircraft Information Summary					
Aircraft Manufacturer McDonnell Douglas		Model/Series MD-83		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 December 26, 2005, at approximately 1635 Pacific standard time, a McDonnell Douglas MD-83, N979AS, was substantially damaged when the airplane experienced a rapid cabin depressurization during climb out from Seattle, Washington. The airline transport pilot captain and first officer, the three flight crew members, and the 137 passengers were not injured. Alaska Airlines Inc. was operating the airplane under Title 14 CFR Part 121, as flight number 536. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed for the commercial cross-country flight that originated approximately 30 minutes before the accident. The flight was on an IFR clearance with a destination of Burbank, California.</p> <p>The captain said that the airplane arrived late into Seattle, from its previous flight, and the new flight crew was waiting at the gate. After the airplane was chalked and the engines were shut down, the first officer immediately performed his preflight inspection.</p> <p>A new (approximately one week on the job) ground baggage handler, who was driving a tug towing a train of baggage carts, said that he waited for a belt loader to be correctly positioned on the right side at the middle cargo door of the airplane. He said that he approached the airplane from aft to forward, but had to maneuver around another train of carts to get close to the belt loader. Once in position, he said the front of his tug was 4 to 5 feet away from the airplane. After loading the carts with baggage, he attempted to drive away. He said that he turned the tug's wheels as far as possible. He stated, "I was hoping to make it out, but I felt my tug going against something. I immediately set my foot on the brakes and glanced at the body [in moderate rain] of the aircraft to see if there was any damage. It was a quick glance and I did not see any damage." He said two other ground personnel came to assist him in maneuvering his tug away from the airplane. He did not report the incident to anyone.</p> <p>The pilot said that the takeoff was normal. During the climb out, at approximately 26,000 feet, they heard a loud bang, and the cabin depressurized. He said that they put their oxygen masks on, and coordinated a descent to a lower altitude with Seattle Center. An uneventful landing was performed at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Seattle, Washington. Post landing examination of the fuselage revealed a 12 by 6 inch hole between the middle and forward cargo doors on the right side of the airplane. After the occurrence, the ground baggage handler confessed that he had "grazed the airplane" with a tug, while attempting to depart the vicinity of the airplane.</p>					
FACTUAL REPORT - AVIATION					
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 National Transportation Safety Board FACTUAL REPORT AVIATION		NTSB ID: SEA06LA033				
		Occurrence Date: 12/26/2005				
		Occurrence Type: Accident				
Landing Facility/Approach Information						
Airport Name Seattle-Tacoma Intern Arpt		Airport ID: SEA	Airport Elevation 433 Ft. MSL	Runway Used NA	Runway Length	Runway Width
Runway Surface Type:						
Runway Surface Condition:						
Type Instrument Approach: Unknown						
VFR Approach/Landing: Unknown						
Aircraft Information						
Aircraft Manufacturer McDonnell Douglas		Model/Series MD-83		Serial Number 53471		
Airworthiness Certificate(s): Transport						
Landing Gear Type: Retractable - Tricycle						
Homebuilt Aircraft? No		Number of Seats: 145	Certified Max Gross Wt. 161000 LBS		Number of Engines: 2	
Engine Type: Turbo Fan		Engine Manufacturer: Pratt & Whitney		Model/Series: JT8D-217A	Rated Power: 20000 LBS	
- Aircraft Inspection Information						
Type of Last Inspection Continuous Airworthiness		Date of Last Inspection 12/2005	Time Since Last Inspection Hours		Airframe Total Time 33530 Hours	
- Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) Information						
ELT Installed? No		ELT Operated? No		ELT Aided in Locating Accident Site? No		
Owner/Operator Information						
Registered Aircraft Owner Alaska Airlines Inc.		Street Address 19300 Pacific HWY S.				
		City Seattle		State WA	Zip Code 98188	
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:				Operator Designator Code: ASAA		
- 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						
FACTUAL REPORT - AVIATION						

 <p>National Transportation Safety Board FACTUAL REPORT AVIATION</p>	NTSB ID: SEA06LA033
	Occurrence Date: 12/26/2005
	Occurrence Type: Accident

First Pilot Information

Name On File	City On File	State On File	Date of Birth On File	Age 53
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Sex: M	Seat Occupied: Left	Principal Profession: Occupational Pilot	Certificate Number: On File
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Certificate(s): Airline Transport; Commercial; Flight Engineer

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

Rotorcraft/Glider/LTA: Free Balloon; Glider

Instrument Rating(s): Airplane

Instructor Rating(s):

Type Rating/Endorsement for Accident/Incident Aircraft?	Current Biennial Flight Review? 07/2005
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Medical Cert.: Class 1	Medical Cert. Status: With Waivers/Limitations	Date of Last Medical Exam: 10/2005
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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	13978									
Pilot In Command(PIC)										
Instructor										
Last 90 Days	162									
Last 30 Days										
Last 24 Hours	1	1		1						

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	State	Airport Identifier	Departure Time	Time Zone
Same as Accident/Incident Location		SEA	1605	PST
Destination	State	Airport Identifier		
Burbank	CA	BUR		


Type of Clearance: IFR

Type of Airspace:

Weather Information

Source of Briefing:
Company; Commercial Weather Service; TV/Radio Weather

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
SEA	1656	PST	433 Ft. MSL	NM	Deg. Mag.

Sky/Lowest Cloud Condition: Few	3000 Ft. AGL	Condition of Light: Day
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Lowest Ceiling: Broken	7000 Ft. AGL	Visibility: 10	SM	Altimeter: 29.88	"Hg
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Temperature: 10 °C	Dew Point: 7 °C	Wind Direction: 190	Density Altitude: Ft.
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Wind Speed: 9	Gusts:	Weather Conditions at Accident Site: Visual Conditions
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Visibility (RVR): Ft.	Visibility (RVV) SM	Intensity of Precipitation:
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Restrictions to Visibility: Moderate - Rain

Type of Precipitation:

Accident Information

Aircraft Damage: Substantial	Aircraft Fire: None	Aircraft Explosion: None
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Classification:

- Injury Summary Matrix	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None	TOTAL
First Pilot				1	1
Second Pilot				1	1
Student Pilot					
Flight Instructor					
Check Pilot					
Flight Engineer					
Cabin Attendants				3	3
Other Crew					
Passengers				137	137
- TOTAL ABOARD -				142	142
Other Ground					
- GRAND TOTAL -				142	142

National Transportation Safety Board

FACTUAL REPORT

AVIATION



NTSB ID: SEA06LA033

Occurrence Date: 12/26/2005

Occurrence Type: Accident

Administrative Information

Investigator-In-Charge (IIC)

James F. Struhsaker

Additional Persons Participating in This Accident/Incident Investigation:

Tom Normoyle
FAA FSDO
Seattle, WA