

Airline Fatalities Jump More Than 900% in 2018

Worldwide airline fatalities jumped over 900 per cent in 2018, with the Aviation Safety Network (ASA) recording a total of 15 fatal airline crashes that resulted in 556 deaths – the highest number since 2014.

Despite the sharp increase, 2018 was still the third safest year ever by the number of fatal accidents, and the ninth safest in terms of fatalities. The turbulent year also comes after 2017 was declared the safest year in commercial airline history, with 10 fatal accidents that resulted in 79 deaths (see related article).

The ASN's statistics are based on all worldwide commercial flights (passenger and cargo flights) involving civil aircraft that carry 14 or more passengers. Military aircrafts are not included.

Of the 15 accidents, 12 were passenger flights, and three were operated by airlines on a European Union blacklist.

Given the estimated worldwide air traffic of roughly 40 million flights, the accident rate is one fatal accident per 2,520,000 flights. ASA CEO Harro Ranter said it was important to remember that aviation fatalities and accidents were following a downward trend.

"If the accident rate had remained the same as ten years ago, there would have been 39 fatal accidents last year."

"At the accident rate of the year 2000, there would have been even 64 fatal accidents. This shows the enormous progress in terms of safety in the past two decades."

The industry watchdog said that "Loss of Control" accidents remained a major safety concern for the industry, with this type of accident responsible for at least ten of the 25 most devastating.

According to the International Air Transport Association, loss of control of an aircraft can result from a range of interferences including engine failures, icing, or stalls.

Major accidents in 2018 included a Cubana de Aviación 737-200 that killed 112 after it crashed shortly after takeoff from Havana, along with the October crash of Lion Air flight 610 near Jakarta, that killed all 189 passengers and crew – the second deadliest airplane accident in Indonesian history.

In April, a Southwest Airlines 737's cabin was depressurised after an engine blew and a window was smashed by debris. It resulted in a woman being sucked out of the broken window, who was pulled back inside the aircraft by fellow passengers, but later died.

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