

Detrimental Effects of Identifying Crew Members in Accident Reports

The goal of every accident investigation is to discover the contributing factors of the occurrence. Crew members involved in an accident or incident are often willing participants in the investigation, knowing that they are contributing to aviation safety by providing the information required to prevent a reoccurrence. They might not be aware that their involvement in the occurrence could result in their name and address being publicly released. This information does not improve aviation safety, but it could result in detrimental consequences.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Surviving pilots involved in an accident often experience feelings of responsibility, guilt, and blame, even if they were not instrumental to the event. There are often reports of symptoms similar to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) including flashbacks, intrusive memories, and the temporary or permanent inability to return to work. They often spend long periods of time in Critical Incident Response Programs (CIRPs) to seek mental health assistance. Publicly releasing personal information of the crew involved could result in increased trauma including the development of complex PTSD (cPTSD).

PHYSICAL SAFETY

There are numerous cases where the publicly disclosed identity of the crew members or air traffic controllers resulted in vengeful attacks.

In February of 2004, an Air Traffic Controller was murdered by the surviving family member of the Überlingen midair collision between Flight V9 2937 and Flight ES 611. Crew members whose personal information is publicly released could experience an increase in media attention and the constant threat of retaliatory violence.

CRIMINAL LIABILITY

In 2015, pilots involved in the hard landing of Flight AC 624 participated fully in the Transportation Safety Board of Canada's (TSB) investigation of the event with the understanding that their witness reports were protected under [the Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board Act](#). This allowed the TSB to

complete their investigation in a timely manner and implement several operational safety improvements. Recently these pilots have been publicly named in a class action lawsuit that could result in lifelong consequences, though they followed the company standard operating procedures as trained.

Other pilots, air traffic controllers, and other transportation professionals could see this lawsuit as a significant barrier to speaking openly and honestly about an accident or incident, especially in States where crew member accident interviews are not protected by law.

CONCLUSION

Releasing personal information about crew members involved in a safety occurrence does not improve aviation safety. Those crew members likely made every effort to avoid the occurrence through their professionalism and expertise (resulting from extensive training), and then willingly participated in the accident investigation to improve aviation safety and prevent a reoccurrence. There are significant negative consequences to publicly providing crew members personal information and it could result in barriers to thorough accident investigations.

NOTE

Please see 23POS26 – [Deidentified Accident Reporting](#) for IFALPA's Position on this topic.