

US Airline Flying Fears Rise

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. **Collision** (noun) /kə'liʒən/: An event where two objects crash into each other with force.
Example: The collision between the two cars caused severe damage and delayed traffic.
2. **Hospitalized** (verb) /'hɒspɪtəˌlaɪzd/: To be admitted into a hospital for treatment.
Example: Several passengers were hospitalized after the bus accident.
3. **Forecast** (noun) /'fɔːrkæst/: A prediction or estimate of future events, often related to weather or finances.
Example: The revenue forecast for the company predicts steady growth next year.
4. **Devastating** (adjective) /'dɛvəˌsteɪtɪŋ/: Causing severe shock, distress, or destruction.
Example: The devastating effects of the hurricane were felt across the entire region.
5. **Consumer** (noun) /kən'suːmə/: A person who purchases goods or services for personal use.
Example: The new product was designed to attract a younger consumer audience.



Around 2.9 million passengers pass through American airports every day, but recent plane crashes may be affecting ticket sales. On January 29, American Airlines flight 5342 collided with an army helicopter over Washington DC's Potomac River, resulting in the deaths of everyone aboard. Following this tragedy, another incident occurred on February 17, when a Delta Air

Lines flight landed upside down in Toronto, Canada. While no deaths were reported in this second accident, many passengers were hospitalized.

These North American crashes came shortly after two major international incidents. On December 25, 2024, an Azerbaijan Airlines flight crashed in Kazakhstan, with more than half of its passengers losing their lives. Just days later, on December 29, a Jeju Air flight crashed in Muan, South Korea, killing all but two passengers. These devastating events have highlighted safety concerns around air travel, despite statistical evidence showing it is still very safe.

Major airlines like American Airlines and Delta Air Lines have reported significant declines in ticket sales following these crashes. Delta CEO Ed Bastian noted that travel bookings began dropping almost immediately after the Washington and Toronto accidents. Similarly, American Airlines CEO Robert Isom admitted that the crash in Washington was a key reason behind reduced revenue forecasts for early 2025. He emphasized the company's commitment to supporting the families of those who lost their lives.

Statistically speaking, air travel remains one of the safest modes of transportation. According to the International Air Transport Association, air accidents claimed 251 lives out of 5 billion passengers worldwide in 2024. Compare this to the National Safety Council's report of 45,000 traffic deaths in the US alone during the same year, and the risks of flying appear minor in comparison.

Despite fears sparked by recent tragedies, flying continues to offer safer outcomes than other transportation methods. The data underscores the low likelihood of air accidents, offering reassurance to passengers. Still, airlines face the challenge of regaining consumer confidence, especially in light of such devastating losses.

DISCUSSION

1. If you were designing an airline safety campaign, what ideas would you include to reassure passengers?
2. Imagine a world where flying fears disappear overnight. How might airlines celebrate?
3. If you were a CEO of an airline, how would you respond to a drop in ticket sales after accidents?
4. How would flying be different if planes had safety features inspired by cars (like airbags)?
5. If planes could talk, what might they say about safety concerns?
6. Imagine you're a passenger in a safety simulation. What would make it both effective and fun?
7. How would air travel change if teleportation replaced flying?
8. If Hollywood made a movie about airline safety, who would play the leading roles?
9. Think of a new gadget that could make airplane crashes less likely. What would it be?
10. What do you think is the most important message airlines should share with passengers right now?