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Delta Air Lines plane crashes, flips at Toronto airport: 18 injured, including child

Zach Wichter, Nathan Diller and Thao Nguyen USA TODAY

Published 3:13 p.m. ET Feb. 17, 2025 | Updated 9:03 p.m. ET Feb. 17, 2025

A Delta Air Lines regional jet flipped upside down upon arrival at Canada's Toronto Pearson Airport on Monday, injuring at least 18 of the 80 people on board, officials said.

The airport confirmed on social media that there was an "incident" involving a Delta flight from Minneapolis, Minnesota, and that all 76 passengers and four crew members were accounted for. The Delta flight crashed while landing at the airport at around 2:45 p.m. local time, the Federal Aviation Administration said in a preliminary statement.

Todd Aitken, Toronto Pearson Airport's fire chief, said during a briefing Monday night that 18 injured passengers were transported to local hospitals after the crash. Hours earlier, the airport's president and CEO Deborah Flint said there were 17 injuries in the accident.

"We can now confirm that 18 injured passengers have been transported to the local area hospitals," Aitken said. "We had one additional passenger recently transported to a hospital."

The airport was shut down for more than two hours before departures and arrivals resumed. But the FAA warned that inbound flights were still being delayed significantly at their departure airports.

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Flint said operational disruptions were likely in the coming days at the airport as two of its runways will be closed for an on-scene investigation.

The incident occurred amid windy weather following a snowstorm. While Aitken said it wasn't appropriate for him to comment on the ongoing investigation into the crash, he noted that the "runway was dry and there was no cross wind conditions."

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada will be in charge of the investigation, according to the FAA. The National Transportation Safety Board added that it will be leading a team of U.S. investigators to assist in the investigation.

"The hearts of the entire global Delta family are with those affected by today's incident at Toronto-Pearson International Airport," Delta CEO Ed Bastian said in a statement. "I want to express my thanks to the many Delta and Endeavor team members and the first responders on site. We are working to confirm the details and will share the most current information on news.delta.com as soon as it becomes available. In the meantime, please take care and stay safe."

Endeavor Air is a wholly-owned regional subsidiary of Delta, based in Minneapolis.

How many people were on board the plane in the Toronto crash?

According to the Delta and Flint, all 80 people on board were evacuated. At least 18 people were injured and transported to hospitals, according to Delta and emergency response officials.

Of those injured, two adults were taken to two different trauma centers by air ambulance and one child was transported to a children's hospital, according to Lawrence Saindon, a superintendent for Peel Regional Paramedic Services. All other injuries range from minor to moderate.

Ornge, which provides air ambulance services, confirmed that it responded to Toronto Pearson International Airport for an "aviation occurrence."

One pediatric patient was transported to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, said spokesperson Joshua McNamara. Two adults were flown by helicopter to Toronto hospitals, including a man in his 60s and a woman in her 40s, according to McNamara.

"We are very grateful that there was no loss of life and relatively minor injuries," Flint said. "We are very focused on the care and the concern and the passengers and the crew — some of whom have already been reunified with their friends and their families."

'It's a lot of chatter and uneasy looks'

Zach Nolan learned his Air Canada flight was delayed upon arrival at the Toronto airport on Monday afternoon, but he didn't know why. After visiting Montreal for the 4 Nations Face-Off ice hockey tournament, he used the extra time to watch a match between Canada and Finland. He was at a bar during a layover en route to see relatives in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Then, a friend texted him that a plane had crashed just outside.

"I look out (the window) behind me, and I'm 90% sure that I'm looking at the plane upside down," said the 24-year-old Winnipeg resident. Red lights flashed on the runway; flyers filled multiple seats at gates as they waited to learn what would become of their itineraries amid a ground stop.

"It's a lot of chatter and a lot of uneasy looks," he said. Nolan, who was traveling with his parents and younger brother, later learned his flight had been canceled after being pushed back multiple times. Air Canada rebooked them for Tuesday morning, and they plan to get a hotel for the night.

"If I had to sum (the scene at the airport) up in one word, I'd say uncertainty," he said.

Investigation underway

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada (Canada's version of the U.S.'s National Transportation Safety Board) will lead the investigation into this incident and said it is sending investigators to the scene.

"The Transportation Safety Board of Canada (TSB) is deploying a team of investigators following an accident involving an aircraft operated by Delta Airlines, that occurred today at the Toronto / Lester B. Pearson International Airport, Ontario. The TSB will gather information and assess the occurrence," a statement from the agency said.

The NTSB confirmed in a post on social media it would be investigators to assist, but added that all official communications about the inquiry will come from Canada's TSB.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said on X, formerly Twitter, that he's in communication with his Canadian counterpart "to offer assistance and help with the investigation."

Experts weigh in on Delta flight flip-over

Expert engineering, the size of the aircraft and seatbelts all likely played a factor in protecting people aboard a passenger jet that flipped over at a Toronto airport, experts said Monday.

While it is extremely rare for an aircraft to flip on its back, they are engineered to handle it, said Mike McCormick, associate professor and program coordinator for air traffic management at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida.

The structural elements of an aircraft are designed so that the wings and the tail will break off and away in the event of a tip over, McCormick said. The seats are designed to withstand impacts up to 16 times the force of gravity, so they will remain in place when the plane is upside down.

That's why people are asked to be strapped in at takeoff and landing, he said. "Absent any loose things flying around the cabin, the seats are designed to keep the passengers strapped in."

Read more here.

— *Dinah Voyles Pulver and Minnah Arshad*

Delta travel waiver

Delta said it had canceled its remaining flights to Toronto for Monday and issued a travel waiver for passengers traveling to, from or through YYZ through Feb. 20. Full details of the waiver are available on Delta's website.

On the heels of another accident

This incident comes on the heels of the widely reported mid-air collision over the Potomac River between an Army Black Hawk and an American Airlines regional jet. That event, currently under intense scrutiny by the National Transportation Safety Board for potential radio communication lapses and altimeter errors, has heightened concerns over regional flight safety and operational protocols in the industry. Further updates are expected.

This is a developing story. Check back for updates.

Contributing: Reuters

Zach Wichter is a travel reporter and writes the Cruising Altitude column for USA TODAY. He is based in New York and you can reach him at zwichter@usatoday.com.