The apparent suicide of a Horizon Air employee on an unauthorized flight with no passengers aboard marked an exceedingly rare crash for an airliner, according to government regulators and industry experts. Only a handful of airline-pilot suicides were reported among airlines worldwide in recent decades. The Federal Aviation Administration guides 42,000 airline and private flights each day, or nearly 16 million in 2016. But when they happen, as with the fiery crash near Seattle, they gain widespread attention. A prominent example was Germanwings Flight 9525, which crashed into the Alps in March 2015 with 150 people aboard. Federal investigators ruled the crash “was due to the deliberate and planned action of the co-pilot, who decided to commit suicide while alone in the cockpit.” Other incidents have been ruled suicides but disputed, including Egypt Air Flight 990 near New York in October 1999 with 217 people aboard and Silk Air Flight 185 crash in Indonesia in December 1997 with 104 people aboard. The reason for the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 in March 2014 with 239 people aboard remains a mystery.

With no passengers aboard, the Seattle incident was similar to a general-aviation accident, where a single pilot crashes a private plane alone. But even those accidents are declining. An FAA report in February 2014 checked 2,758 aviation fatalities during a 10-year period and found eight cases of probable suicide. Five of those pilots had commercial licenses, two of whom had a history of suicide threats or joking about suicide. But all the incidents happened in small propeller planes or a helicopter. Despite the rarity, government regulators and industry officials have studied whether to adjust medical exams because psychological problems are essentially self-reported.

“Airline crews are just like the rest of us. Sometimes they have mental illnesses, and those need to be identified and treated, and done so in a way that doesn’t risk the flying public,” said Greg Raiff, CEO of Private Jet Services, which lines up charter flights for clients. “Nobody wants to let one slip by, and the current system doesn’t do enough to prevent that.”

The 29-year-old Horizon employee took the Bombardier Q400 turboprop from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport about 8 p.m. and performed dangerous maneuvers, authorities said. The employee was initially identified as a mechanic, but might instead have been a ground-services agent, authorities said. Two F-15 fighter jets pursued the plane before it crashed into Ketron Island.

Investigators with the National Transportation Safety Board are working to figure out how the incident unfolded. Debra Eckrote, regional director for the NTSB’s western Pacific region, said investigators were trying to recover the cockpit recorder, which could have captured the man talking as he commandeered the plane and may hold clues for a motive. She said the event was “very unusual,” adding, “It’s not like we get this every day.” Eckrote said the plane crashed in a heavily treed area. Both wings were ripped from it and the rest of the aircraft was left in pieces, she said.

The public information officer for Pierce County, Washington, Ed Troyer, described the pilot as a “suicidal male,” but not a terrorist.

“I’ve got a lot of people that care about me. It’s going to disappoint them to hear that I did this,” the pilot said in recorded comments to air-traffic controllers. “Just a broken guy, got a few screws loose, I guess.”

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association is assisting the investigation. President Paul Rinaldi commended the controller’s poise during the incident. “The recordings of the incident display his exceptional professionalism and his calm and poised dedication to the task at hand that is a hallmark of our air traffic controller workforce nationwide,” Rinaldi said.

Brad Tilden, CEO of Alaska Airlines, which includes Horizon, said an employee took an unauthorized flight and that the company was cooperating with investigators. “I want to share how incredibly sad all of us at Alaska are about this incident,” Tilden said.

“We’re working to find out everything we possibly can about what happened, working with the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the National Transportation Safety Board.”

The U.S. policy to always have two people in the cockpit is intended to protect against health problems. Before a pilot is the greatest privilege on the planet. Stay safe by verifying that we’re “Fit to Fly” prior to every flight. If in doubt, there are a myriad of resources available — reach out.

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AUGUST 2018 NEWSLETTER

ACCOMPILMENTS!!!

HOANG (FRANCIS) DIHN
First Solo C-152 CFI AXEL SEIXAS
ERIN O’CONNOR
First Solo C-152 CFI AXEL SEIXAS
HOANG (FRANCIS) DIHN
Solo Cross Country C-152 CFI AXEL SEIXAS
CHUNG HUA YANG
Solo Cross Country C-152 CFI AXEL SEIXAS
JONATHAN BASTIAANS
Private C-152 CFI KEVIN WU
DAYGUN LEE
Private C-152 CFI RYAN DAVIS
FERRAN MARTI
Private C-152 CFI NELSON SUNWOO
ALLEGRA PATTERSON
Instrument C-172 CFI MONTY GROUTAGE
RYU YEON JIN
Instrument C-172 CFI ALEX SHOWMAN
DAEGUEN “CHARLES” LIM
Commercial Single Warrior CFI NELSON SUNWOO
FU-CHEH “VINCENT” YU
Commercial Single Warrior CFI NELSON SUNWOO
LUCAS PRADELLA
Commercial Multi Seminole CFI RICHARD GARNETT
POCHUN TSENG
Commercial Multi Seminole CFI JOHN CAMPBELL
FU-CHEH “VINCENT” YU
Commercial Multi Seminole CFI RICHARD GARNETT
MENG FEI “MAGGIE” CAI
CFI Warrior CFI JOHN CAMPBELL
POCHUN TSENG
CFI C-172SP CFI ABHISHEK MUDGAL
AXEL SEIXAS
CFII C-152 CFI IUN WATANABE

YOUR NAME HERE — ATTENTION PILOTS IN TRAINING: Please send pictures of you and your aircraft after your accomplishment to Sue at: lbfcusan@gmail.com. Include your name, and rating/license and your CFI name. Thank you!

CONGRATULATIONS to RICHARD GARNETT, top CLUB CFI for July, logging the most hours of dual given in club aircraft! Runners-up were ALEX SHOWMAN and AXEL SEIXAS!!!

TOP GUN AWARD goes to TING-WEN KUO for logging the most flight hours in club aircraft in July! Runners up were FU-CHEH YU and CHARTNARONG CHOOBOON!!!


CONGRATULATIONS to club pilot RUDI LIMICH and his new bride, SARAH BROUGH LIMICH on their recent nuptials!

CONGRATULATIONS to the family of JOHN CAMPBELL on the birth of his 13th grandchild on August 10, 2018, PATRIC MOISES CAMPBELL, 8 pounds 5 ounces and 21” tall!

(following page) passenger flight, airline crew members evaluate each other for their readiness to fly. Under FAA rules, commercial passenger pilots under age 40 have physical exams every year and those older every six months to keep their certificates to fly. The pilot fills out a medical history through part of the FAA’s website called MedXPress before visiting the doctor. Besides typical physical characteristics, the questions ask about medications, ailments such as vision or heart problems, and mental disorders such as depression or anxiety.

Computerization, both of the medical histories and prescriptions, helps prevent a pilot who fails a physical exam from applying to a different doctor. The 15- to 20-minute meeting between the pilot and doctor also involves asking questions about the pilot’s mental status for depression or suicidal feelings, and about medication such as anti-depressants. “The doctor can ask if you have any problems at home. You can say no, even if the answer is yes, and that’s a reason somebody can steal a plane and crash it,” Raiff said. “The FAA regulations provide for a strong level of mental health. The challenge is they don’t require a strong level of auditing and enforcement.”

The Air Line Pilots Association, a union representing 60,000 pilots, said it was monitoring the investigation and offering its assistance. “The safety and security of our skies is ALPA’s top priority and our members train for life to ensure that flying remains the safest form of transportation in the world,” the union said.

CHECKPOINTS

Oct 19-21 2018
Save the Date: Breitling Huntington Beach Airshow — All eyes look to the sky during the Breitling Huntington Beach Airshow featuring spectacular stunts from fleets of planes and jets flying over the Pacific Ocean in the only beachfront airshow on the West Coast. Flying begins at noon each day with many of the aerobatic maneuvers happening over “show center” on Huntington City Beach.

NEW & REJOINED CLUB PILOTS!

ADEL BESHAII
ESTEBAN CAMACHO
JOHN FIGUROA
KEEKEN GREENE
JESUS HERNANDEZ
CHEN EN HU
MAXIMINA MACEN
RICARDO MANALO
BRIAN MCCLOYNN
ERIN O’CONNOR
CHLOE REYNOSO
JERRY SAROS

HAPPY AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

MARCOS ANTONIO ALMAZAN
JEFF BUENTGEN
TA CHENG
CHENG FUCHI
JEFFREY COLL VALDES
RYAN DAVIS
JEFFREY EWART
KEITH FLEMING
EDGAR FLORES
DEAN HALL
MARK R. HILSTAD
MICHAEL JOHNSON
KENNETH LANCY
TODD LE
HANSEUNG LEE
BRENNAN LIU
JAMES LOISCH
SEAN MCCORMICK
LING KANG MENG
STEPHEN MOORE
PEJMIN MOTAGHEDI
HAMEE NAKAMURA
ALISTAIR NEAL
PAUL PADGETT
DORAN PINUELLAS
RANJEEET RAJAN
FRANK REINMILLER
MICHAEL SARABI
JERRY SAROS
MIKE SEIDERER
HIROMI SHIMIZU
ANNE SHOMO
MATTHEW SMAGENKA
LOUIS SPRINGER
ENRIQUE VERA
ROBERT WILSON
KAIYU WU
CHOOING MO YANG
HAU REN YU
STEVEN YUE

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