



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20591

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OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

September 10, 1970

Honorable John H. Shaffer
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D. C. 20590

Dear Mr. Shaffer:

Our investigation of the Overseas National Airways DC-9-33F ditching near the island of St. Croix on May 2, 1970, appears to indicate that no warning of impending impact was received in the cabin prior to the crash.

Although the flightcrew did read and execute the company's emergency landing or ditching checklist prior to impact, this checklist did not contain an instruction to warn the passengers. The amplified checklist contained in the aircraft flight manual sets forth this requirement as one of the captain's preimpact duties. The timing and sequence of the warning are further elaborated upon in the emergency procedures section of the company's operations manual. We have examined the emergency checklists of several other air carriers and found that the requirement to warn the passengers does not appear on this checklist, though it is discussed in the emergency procedures section of their flight manuals.

The preparation and bracing of the passengers to accept decelerative forces is, in the Board's opinion, an integral part of configuring the aircraft for a ditching or emergency landing. As such, it should not be left to memory, but should be placed on the emergency checklist for these procedures.

Therefore, we recommend that:

The item "Warn Passengers" be inserted into the emergency landing or ditching checklists of all carriers, and that it be one of the last items prior to impact, yet sufficiently advanced to insure adequate time to permit the passengers to brace for a crash.

Sincerely yours,

John H. Reed
Chairman