



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20591

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A70-46

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

September 14, 1970

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

Dear Mr. Shaffer:

During the recent investigation of the ditching of the DC-9, owned by Overseas National Airways and operated as ALM Flight 980, on May 2, 1970, near St. Croix, Virgin Islands, comments from survivors indicated that many passengers experienced difficulties in removing the lifevest from beneath their seats. The difficulty appeared to be in the release of a strap and snap fastener holding the lifevest pocket closed. A few passengers were unable to remove the lifevests from beneath their seats because of this difficulty. At least two had to get on their hands and knees to effect removal. Other passengers commented on the time consumed by these unnecessary activities. The Board feels that any activity to be performed by a passenger in an emergency should be made as simple as possible, with unimpeded access to the lifevest. The pocket should therefore be left open.

In view of the above, the Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration take the necessary steps to:

Re-examine the methods utilized aboard aircraft for holding lifevests with a view towards eliminating any obstructions to expeditious access in the event of an emergency requiring their use.

Our Bureau of Aviation Safety staff is at your disposal for any further information which you may desire.

Sincerely yours,

John H. Reed
Chairman