

(3) Emergency evacuation was conducted, Fuel leaking from the fuel tank caught fire and the aircraft was engulfed in flames

Summary: On August 20, 2007, a Boeing 737-800, operated by Airline C, landed at Naha Airport. Immediately after the aircraft stopped at Spot 41, fuel that was leaking from the fuel tank on the right wing caught fire. The aircraft was engulfed in flames and destroyed by the fire, leaving only part of the airframe intact.

There were 165 persons on board, consisting of the captain, seven other crew members, and 157 passengers (including two infants). There were no dead or wounded.

Lead up to emergency evacuation

10:31:57

The aircraft stopped in Spot 41.

10:32:53

A fire broke out somewhere in an area aft of the No.2 (right) engine and it spread to the right wing leading edge and the apron surface below the No.2 engine.

10:33:05

The assistant maintenance engineer reported the fire to the captain over the interphone.

10:33:52

The captain instructed the cabin crew to prepare for an evacuation.

10:34:24

Passengers began evacuation.

10:36:06

Evacuation of passengers and cabin crew was completed.

10:36:11

The first explosion occurred on the right wing.

10:36:20

The captain escaped through the right-hand cockpit window using an evacuation assist rope.



Situation at evacuation

- There were no dead or wounded.
- The time required for the evacuation was 2 minutes and 28 seconds. (from 10:33:52 to 10:36:20)
- The number of evacuation slides used was 4 out of 6.
- In a questionnaire survey conducted for the passengers, about 25% of the respondents said that they saw assistants at the bottom end of the evacuation slides.
- About 60% of the respondents brought their baggage with them when they evacuated. None of them said that they were restrained by carrying their baggage as they evacuated.

Factors contributing to there being no casualties

It is considered highly probable that the following factors contributed to there being no casualties and wounded people despite the huge scale of the fire and the delayed start of fire-fighting operations.

- An orderly evacuation was made possible due partly to the fact that the passengers had begun preparing for disembarkation immediately after the aircraft stopped in its spot and were waiting in line in the aisle.
- The ground crew members were aware of the abnormal condition that was suspected of fuel leakage with the aircraft at an early stage and reported it to the captain.
- The emergency exits of the aircraft were positioned relatively low to the ground, and the accident occurred during daytime in good weather, which helped facilitate the evacuation.
- Voluntary assistance by ground crew members at the slides helped evacuees make a smooth exit.
- The fire started after the aircraft had parked, which facilitated discovery and reporting of the fire and prompt implementation of evacuation and assistance.
- As the adjacent aircraft stands on both sides were empty, no other aircraft suffered any damage.
- The disembarkation was not of a type using a boarding bridge, which eliminated the chance of the bridge and the terminal building suffering any damage.

The investigation report of this case is published on the Board's website.
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http://www.mlit.go.jp/jtsb/eng-air_report/B18616.pdf