

Beat: Technology

Pilot error caused Asiana plane crash in San Francisco - NTSB

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USPA News - The crash of Asiana Airlines flight 214 at San Francisco International Airport in California last year was caused by the crew's mismanagement and over-reliance on automated systems that caused the aircraft to descend below the visual glidepath to the runway, U.S. investigators concluded on Tuesday. The accident happened on the morning of July 6, 2013, when Asiana Airlines flight 214 struck a seawall and crashed on approach to runway 28L at San Francisco International Airport, killing two Chinese students and seriously injuring 49 more.

A third victim, 16-year-old Ye Mangyuan, was injured but survived the crash until she was run over by a fire truck. Flight 214, flown by a Boeing 777 aircraft that was carrying a total of 307 people, was about to finish a 10-hour flight from Incheon International Airport in South Korea when it crashed in San Francisco. The force of the impact and a subsequent fire that followed destroyed most of the aircraft. But after a year-long investigation, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) determined that the flight crew mismanaged the initial approach to the airport, causing the aircraft to fly well above the desired glidepath as it neared the runway. In response to the excessive altitude, the captain then selected an inappropriate autopilot mode and took other actions that caused the auto-throttle to stop controlling airspeed. As the airliner descended below the desired glidepath, the crew did not notice the decreasing airspeed nor did they respond to the unstable approach, the NTSB said. The flight crew finally began a go-around maneuver when the airplane was just 100 feet (30 meters) from the ground, but it was already too late and the aircraft struck the seawall just 1.5 second later. NTSB Acting Chairman Christopher Hart criticized the crew for over-relying on automated systems without fully understanding how they interacted with each other. "Automation has made aviation safer. But even in highly automated aircraft, the human must be the boss," he said. As a result of the investigation, the NTSB made a number of recommendations to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Asiana Airlines, as well as others involved. Among these recommendations, the NTSB emphasized the need for Asiana pilots to have more opportunities for manual flying and the creation of a context-dependent low energy alerting system. "Today, good piloting includes being on the lookout for surprises in how the automation works, and taking control when needed," Hart added.

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