



**U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Aviation
Administration**

SAFO

Safety Alert for Operators

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http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/safo/all_safo

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Subject: Addressing Risk Associated with Passenger Non-Compliance and Retention of Carry-On Baggage and Personal Items During Emergency Evacuations.

Purpose: This SAFO serves to emphasize the operational and safety-critical importance of strict passenger compliance with crewmember instructions during emergency evacuations. Specifically, it addresses the adverse effects of passengers attempting to evacuate with carry-on items, which can significantly impede evacuation procedures and increase the potential for injury or fatality.

Background: Operational data, post-event analyses, and safety reports have identified a recurring safety hazard: passenger attempts to retrieve carry-on items during evacuations. This behavior directly affects safety by undermining evacuation efficiency. It has been cited as a contributing factor in delayed evacuations, increased injury rates, and compromised survivability during time-critical emergencies involving smoke, fire, or structural damage.

Discussion: Passenger retrieval of carry-on items during emergency evacuations introduces numerous risks and hazards, including but not limited to:

- Elevated injury and fatality risk, due to passenger crowding in aisles and exits blocked by baggage.
- Delays to egress, increasing total evacuation time beyond survivability thresholds.
- Trip, slip, and fall hazards, particularly in high-stress, low-visibility environments.
- Damage to evacuation slides.

Any delay caused by retrieval of baggage can significantly affect survival rates in rapidly deteriorating conditions.

Recommended Action: Operators should evaluate their emergency evacuation procedures, training and emergency announcements and commands to address passenger non-compliance particularly in relation to carry-on item retrieval. A coordinated approach rooted in regulatory compliance, operational best practice, and clear public communication may contribute significantly to reducing evacuation times and preserving life in time-critical emergencies. Operators should consider the following:

A. Safety Management System (SMS). Operators should leverage their SMS to evaluate evacuation procedures and identify potential hazards, implementing mitigation strategies as appropriate.

B. Safety Briefings.

- Ensure safety briefings instruct passengers to leave all belongings behind in the event of an evacuation.
- Use standardized, concise messaging stating that all bags or personal belongings must be left behind with no exceptions.
- Evaluate exit row passenger briefing to ensure effectiveness.

C. Passenger Outreach and Education Campaigns

- Consider communication methods to highlight consequences of non-compliance with crewmember commands regarding retrieval of personal items during an evacuation.
- Display visual content in airport terminals and boarding areas demonstrating appropriate evacuation behavior and consequences of non-compliance with crewmember commands.
- Use universally recognizable symbols or pictograms to convey messages across language barriers.
- Incorporate messaging that appeals to collective responsibility (e.g., “Help everyone get out safely—leave your bags.”).
- Establish and normalize expected behavior by promoting the idea that “everyone leaves bags behind.”

Contact: Direct questions or comments regarding this SAFO to the Air Transportation Division at 9-AFS-200-Correspondence@faa.gov.