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Germanwings 9525

An Accident and its Impact on Crews, Operation and the Organization



INTRODUCTION

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Homebase: DUS

Personal Data:

54 years old, married



This is not a morning session.

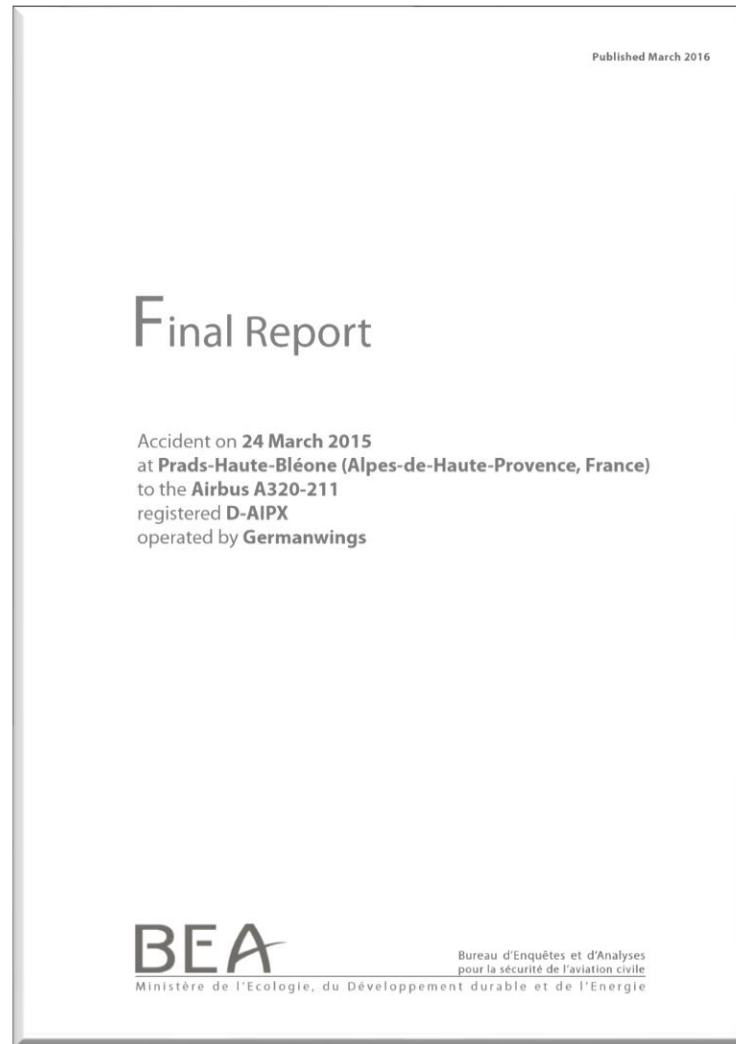
And I don't want it to be a mourning
session.

I want to share my experience with you.

It Does Not Only Happen to Others!

Germanwings 4U9525 crashes in the French Alps







Deliberate flight into terrain

Aircraft	Airbus A320-211 registered D-AIPX
Date and time	24 March 2015 at 09 h 41 ⁽¹⁾
Opertor	Germanwings
Place	Prads-Haute-Bléone (04)
Type of flight	Commercial Air Transport Revenue operations, Passenger
Persons on board	Captain (PM), co-pilot (PF), 4 cabin crew, 144 passengers
Consequences and damage	Crew and passengers fatally injured, aeroplane destroyed



3.2 Causes (from BEA Final Report)

The collision with the ground was due to the deliberate and planned action of the co-pilot who decided to commit suicide while alone in the cockpit.

Safety Recommendations

- 4.1 Medical evaluation of pilots with mental health issues
- 4.2 Routine analysis of in-flight incapacitation
- 4.3 Mitigation of the consequences of loss of licence
- 4.4 Anti-depressant medication and flying status
- 4.5 Balance between medical confidentiality and public safety
- 4.6 Promotion of pilot support programs.



But what if ...?



How will they react:

Our Crews, our Operations, our Organisation?

- **individual reactions** (crying, withdrawal, communication, silence, shock, paralysis, actionism, encapsulation, function mode, helplessness, perplexity ... - in very different timings)
- Some reported **unfit** to fly
- Some **continued** their flight duties
- Some even asked if they can **fly** on their off-days
- Some **volunteered** for support duties
- Many used **counselling** after their duties (CISM) – (automatic process)
- Many **stayed** in check-in areas in order to communicate with their colleagues
- Many **comforted** each other
- Some started to create **rituals** (condolence books, candles in front of photos)
- Normal **training was interrupted** (simulator, classroom)
- Many **speculated** about causes.

- Some took part in **rituals** (services, weekly mourning session DUS)
- Few felt **guilty** (duty roster changes – self implied or crewing implied)
- Many were **grateful** that they were not „involved“
- Some **reframed** their personal situation (EQ)
- Many made use of **counselling** offers (CISM) on an individual initiative
- Many processed, started to come to terms with the situation (**distraction!**)
especially during work hours
- Many were **afraid** of their first on-duty-flight to BCN
- Many **came back** to „normal operations“
- Some **addressed** the accident during training events
- Nearly all developed a strong „**we-belong-together**“-feeling.

- Many **reframed** their living and working situation
 - greater basic satisfaction despite the deep sorrow of what happened
 - stronger appreciation for what they have
 - greater overall calmness
- Few **quit flying**
- Few showed **psychological issues** (anxiety, depression etc.)
- Many **came back** to normal operations
- Some continued to **address** the accident during training events
- The majority learned to **live with the scar**.

OBSERVATION: OPERATIONS

- **Startled**/were shocked (technically due to workload and incoming calls/requests)
- followed **crisis management protocoll**
- with great patience **supported** in-flights, down-routes, outgoing flights (in that order)
- **increased working hours** in order to maintain a safe operation
- **adapted normal procedures** to unnormal situations, i.e. access routes for crews to/from duty at airport, cancellations, sub-charters, passenger handling etc. ...

OBSERVATION: OPERATIONS

- did **not** put any kind of **pressure** on the crews !!!
- **reduced** all non-necessary actions to minimum
- were not able to support all requests which in some cases **left crews on their own** or produced significant delays
- came back to „**normal**“ operations after 4 days
- sent representatives to France to **assist** in accident investigation
- some staff showed long term **psychological issues** (guilt, depression).

OBSERVATION: ORGANISATION

- **double-startled** (technically due to workload and incoming calls/requests and because ironically for this very morning a crisis management exercise had been scheduled to take place)
- followed **crisis management protocoll** in cooperation with Lufthansa Crisis Management (involving SAT, CISM, Re-Booking Policies, Website update etc.)
- **secured** the germanwings headquarters and personell
- **increased working hours**, employee briefings ...



OBSERVATION: ORGANISATION

- **reduced** all non-necessary actions to a minimum
- **organisation** of all accident-related matters (information and support of relatives, transportation to France to the accident site for relatives, legal matters, immediate monetary support, press releases, internal communication, set up of funeral sessions (external and for relatives, internal for crews and all other personell))
- support of accident investigation and **cooperation** with authorities.

CONCLUSION

All Crews (and their relatives), Operations and Organisation were

STARTLED

SURPRISED

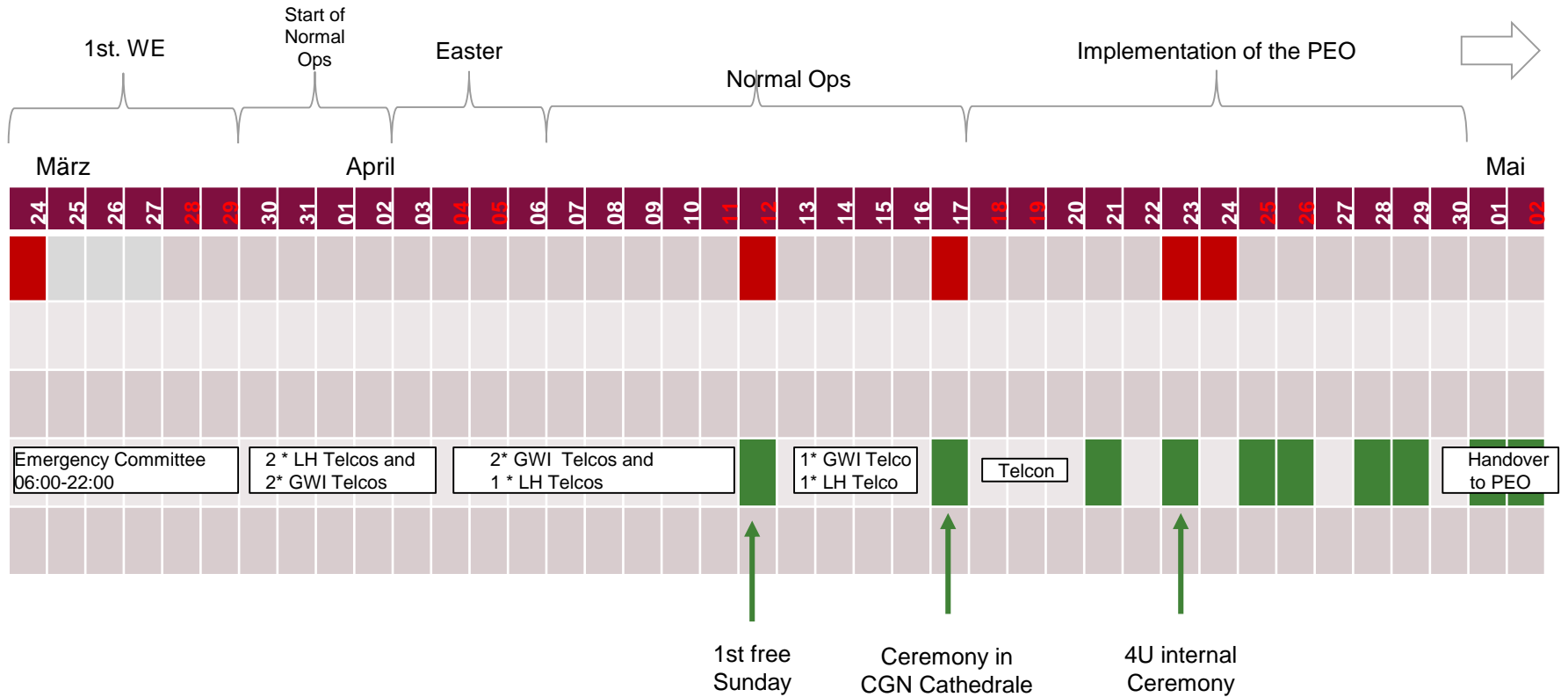
DISTRACTED

and they all needed

TIME to recover.

10:41

Overview of the first 5 Weeks



CONCLUSION

All people involved showed a huge variety of reactions (in intensity and duration) and needed their own timing and strategies in coping with their personal emotional state, which they did!

A company-wide startle and surprise effect could be seen. **Resilience** developed due to

1. An immediate and strong **Crisis Management** with a widely-understood and well-trained crisis plan (procedures/knowledge)
2. A strong and **empathetic leadership** on every level in the organisation, be it crews, operations or administration (attitude).

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Training and Learning

- Do we need to address **intra-personal** competencies in training courses such as Command Courses or Purser/CDC Courses and other leadership development Courses with topics like
 - personal crisis experiences and coping strategies
 - personal emotional management
 - empathetic leadership
 - frame of competencies/scope of decision making?
- What are the **risks** of such training, what are the benefits?

AFFIRMATIONS

You are fine, if/when ...

- You have a well established **crisis management** which is thoroughly understood and soundly trained
- Everybody in your organisation **understands** that overcoming the **startle effect** requires time to breathe in order to recover
- You show respect for the many **different ways** in which people deal with emotions and stress
- You have the **support systems** for passengers and relatives (SAT) and crews (CISM) and (!) the crisis management team (psychological supervision)
- Your leaders are trained to recognize and **deal with emotions**, their own and of their staff/crew/subordinates

AFFIRMATIONS

You are fine, if/when ...

- You **allow time** to come back to normality (operations)
- After an accident you allow short-, medium- and long-term **rituals** to overcome the emotional impact
- You will finally be able to **accept** the accident/event as a part of your own and the company's **history**
- Your **daily routine allows room** to address the topics which keep your employees/crews busy: uncertainty, speculations, grief, passenger reactions and fears
- You have a profound **trust** in the overall ability of humans to overcome a crisis (individuals, families, groups and teams, organisations, companies ...)
- You **address areas of awkwardness** in a timely and appropriate manner (death on board, incidents, accidents)

AFFIRMATIONS

You are fine, if/when ...

- You acknowledge that you are already well prepared and that you will be able to provide the necessary competencies as and when you encounter a crisis. So:
 - **Don't be afraid!** Or
 - **Trust your training** – trust your competencies, trust your people's **competencies!**
- You **continue learning**, continue to address the importance of training - not only knowledge and skills but as well intra-personal intelligence. This will create inter-personal competency and thus the professional attitudes which are required for our area of commitment.
- Let us as the aviation community, together with our authorities, continue to **learn from science** – they look deeper!

Questions & Discussion

Thank you very much for your attention!

