

How common are US commercial airplane crashes? Here's what the data shows

More than 80 commercial planes have crashed in the U.S. since 1970.

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WASHINGTON —

A week after the **midair collision in Washington, D.C.**, a small commuter plane crashed Thursday in western Alaska, killing all 10 people onboard.

An analysis by the Hearst Television Data Team found that there have been 87 fatal crashes involving commercial airplanes with at least 10 people on board in the U.S. since 1970.

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However, such incidents have become increasingly rare since the 2010s. In fact, the Jan. 29 midair collision was the first deadly commercial airline crash in the U.S. in the 2020s.

Noncommercial flights, like the medical jet that crashed in a Philadelphia neighborhood on Jan. 31, were not included in the data examined.

Prior to the Washington, D.C., midair collision, the last commercial plane crash in the United States with no survivors was Colgan Air Flight 3407 in 2009.

Colgan Air Flight 3407 was scheduled to fly from Newark, New Jersey, to Buffalo, New York, on Feb. 12, 2009. Shortly after approaching Buffalo-Niagara International Airport, the aircraft crashed into a home in Clarence Center, New York. All 45 passengers, four flight crew and one person on the ground died.

A year after the crash, the National Transportation Safety Board determined that pilot error and lack of training were the probable causes of the crash. By pulling back the control column, the pilot tilted the nose of the plane up instead of lowering it and applying full power.

Aeromexico Flight 498 was the last commercial plane with at least 10 people on board to fatally collide with another aircraft midair in the U.S. The flight, carrying 64 people, was scheduled to fly from Mexico City, Mexico, to Los Angeles, California, on Aug. 31, 1986.

While en route to its final destination, the plane collided midair with a Piper PA-28-181, a private plane with three people on board, over Cerritos, California. Both planes crashed to the ground, destroying five houses and killing 15 people on the ground, causing 82 deaths in total.

The NTSB found the pilot of the PA-28 had entered the Los Angeles Terminal Control Area without the required communication or clearance from air traffic control and that his airplane was not properly equipped for the flight.

Aeromexico Flight 498 remains the deadliest midair collision of a commercial plane since the 1970s.

Commercial airplane crashes since 1970

The table below includes crashes involving commercial flights with 10 or more occupants, occurring either in the air or on the ground. The data sourced and vetted by the Hearst Television Data Team includes crashes within the U.S., the waters surrounding the U.S. and flights between two U.S. locations. This includes noncontiguous locations such as Hawaii, the Virgin Islands and Guam.