

Fatal air accidents surge in 2024: IATA

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Geneva: The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has reported a sharp rise in fatal aviation accidents in 2024, contrasting with the record-low numbers of the previous year.

According to IATA's 2024 Annual Safety Report, there were seven fatal accidents across 40.6 million flights, a stark increase from just one in 2023. The number of onboard fatalities also surged from 72 in 2023 to 244 in 2024, exceeding the five-year average of 144.

IATA said that despite the rise in fatal accidents, the aviation industry's overall safety performance remained strong. The all-accident rate stood at 1.13 per million flights (one accident per 880,000 flights), an improvement over the five-year average of 1.25 but slightly worse than the 1.09 recorded in 2023. Similarly, the fatality risk remained low at 0.06, below the five-year average of 0.10, although double the 0.03 reported in the previous year.

"Even with recent high-profile aviation accidents, it is important to remember that accidents are extremely rare. There were 40.6 million flights in 2024 and seven fatal accidents. Moreover, the long-term story of aviation safety is one of continuous improvement," said Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General.

"A decade ago, the five-year average (2011-2015) was one accident for every 456,000 flights. Today, the five-year average (2020-2024) is one accident for every 810,000 flights. That improvement is because we know that every fatality is one too many. We honour the memory of every life lost in an aviation accident with our deepest sympathies and ever-greater resolve to make flying even safer. And for that, the accumulation of safety data, including the 2024 safety report, is our most powerful tool," said Walsh.

The report highlighted several emerging safety risks, including rising conflict zone threats. Two aircraft were downed in conflict zones in 2024—one in Kazakhstan (38 fatalities) and another in Sudan (five fatalities)—reinforcing the need for stronger international safeguards in high-risk airspace.

The most common accident types in 2024 were tail strikes and runway excursions, underscoring the importance of enhanced safety measures during take-off and landing. Notably, there were no controlled-flight-into-terrain (CFIT) accidents.

The report also emphasized the growing threat of interference by the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), particularly in Türkiye, Iraq, and Egypt. Between 2023 and 2024, reports of GNSS interference surged by 175 per cent, while GPS spoofing incidents spiked by 500 per cent.

With two accidents in 2024, the all-accident rate in the Middle East and North Africa improved from 1.12 accidents per million sectors in 2023 to 1.08 in 2024 and was also better than its five-year average of 1.09.

Fatality risk has remained zero since 2019. While no accidents were related to GNSS interference, it has emerged as a critical area of concern in the region.

In the United States, with 12 accidents, the all-accident rate improved from 1.53 per million sectors in 2023 to 1.20 in 2024 and was better than the region's five-year average of 1.26. Fatality risk has remained zero since 2020.

The most common accident types in 2024 were tail strikes, runway damage and runway excursions. While no accidents have been linked to debris from space operations, the increasing number of rocket launches presents challenges for air traffic management.