

US flight experiences rapid drop; 2 injured

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: Two passengers were injured when a United Express flight, operated by SkyWest Airlines, bound for Houston, encountered severe turbulence, causing the aircraft to lose 4,350 feet of altitude within 44 seconds.

The sudden and rapid descent occurred mid-flight, resulting in injuries to passengers onboard. Emergency protocols were promptly activated, and the flight continued safely to its destination.

The incident took place when SkyWest flight 5971 took off from Aspen, Colorado on the evening of Thursday (Aug 28), according to agency report.

After the turbulence and the subsequent tumbling, the flight was diverted to Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, where it "landed safely" around 8 pm local time. As per the air traffic control audio, one

of the pilots informed the on-ground responders that a stretcher was required and that there is 'bleeding as well'.

"The flight landed safely and was met with medical personnel upon arrival. Our highest priority is the safety and well-being of all onboard, and we are working with our partner United to assist customers," the airline said in a statement.

"Medical authorities reported to the airport that no injuries are expected to be life-threatening," it added.

The flight experienced severe turbulence as it passed near Fort Worth at an altitude of 39,000 feet, around 00:27 UTC, approximately 90 minutes into the journey. According to Flightradar24, between 00:27:06 and 00:27:50 (44 seconds), the flight descended from 39,000 feet to 34,650 feet before climbing back up to 37,450 feet by 00:28:50.

"After that point, the aircraft began a descent to land at Austin, squawking 7700 (the squawk code for general emergency) at 00:30:57 UTC," the report stated.

Notably, a severe turbulence is defined as when the up and down movements of a plane going through disturbed air exert more than 1.5g-force on the body, which is enough to lift a passenger out of the seat if they weren't wearing a seatbelt.

While deaths due to turbulence are extremely rare, the injuries suffered by the passengers owing to increased turbulence incidents highlight that the problem may need an engineering solution to keep planes safer.

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