

AVIATION EXPERTS DEBATE PILOT EXAMS AFTER GERMANWINGS CRASH

News / Airlines



Aviation experts meeting in Germany said they want to improve **psychological and medical testing of pilots** following the **Germanwings crash** in March that killed 144 passengers and six crewmembers.

The proposals from the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), which met this week at a workshop for 150 aviation experts, including pilots, suggest mandatory psychological evaluation for all pilots at the start of their careers, strengthening regular medical exams and the creation of a database of medical information on pilots that countries could share.

The European safety agency hopes to finalize its proposals in early 2016 so changes can be implemented next year. The proposals will also consider any information about the Germanwings crash released by French investigators, according to the agency.

"We need to act quickly if we want to minimize the risk of a catastrophe such as the Germanwings accident to happen again," said Patrick Ky, executive director of EASA.



Germanwings Flight 9525 slammed into the French Alps on March 24 while heading from Barcelona to Duesseldorf, Germany, killing all 150 people on board the Airbus A320.

German prosecutors have said co-pilot Andreas Lubitz, 27, who had been treated for depression, locked the pilot out of the cockpit and intentionally crashed the plane.

At the airline's parent company, Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr said after the crash that Lubitz was 100% qualified but that the airline did not require psychological testing. Lufthansa and other European airlines began requiring two crewmembers in the cockpit at all times, as U.S. airlines already did.



In the U.S., airline pilots get medical tests every six months or a year, depending on their age. Pilots must report any physical or psychological conditions and medications, and doctors ask mental health questions.

Crewmembers also meet before each flight to evaluate one another and ensure they are ready to fly. Besides psychological problems, fatigue and substance abuse would raise flags.

Airline pilot suicides are exceedingly rare, with just a handful of cases suspected worldwide during the past 30 years. Pilots and medical experts have said it would be difficult to test for psychological problems that a pilot does not acknowledge.

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