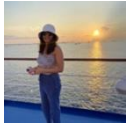


FEATURE

After Screwing Up on Earth, Boeing Now Appears to Be Failing in Space

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June 25, 2024

<https://www.fodors.com/news/news/after-screwing-up-on-earth-boeing-is-failing-people-in-space>

NASA

Houston, we have a problem. It's Boeing.

Two NASA astronauts, Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore, are the latest people to be impacted by a Boeing technical issue. The company's Starliner spacecraft is parked at the International Space Station (ISS), while NASA and Boeing engineers analyze the problems that are delaying its return.

The space veterans have been docked on the ISS since June 6 on what had been intended as a one-week roundtrip mission. Due to helium leaks and failures of thrusters en route to space, the mission has been [extended](#) multiple times and on-ground engineers are working to find answers. [NASA](#) has confirmed that the Starliner capsule can spend up to 45 days at the orbiting laboratory and there's no reason to believe that the capsule won't be able to complete the journey home.

But it's yet another blow to Boeing's reputation. To be fair, the commercial side of Boeing—which is currently riddled with problems (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#))—is different from the aerospace department. The fact of the matter is that both seem to be failing their customers.

The company can't do anything right these days. But can you imagine that this may be the least of its earthly problems?

Just this week, [prosecutors have recommended](#) the Department of Justice (DOJ) bring criminal charges against Boeing for all the safety problems surrounding the 737 Max. The department hasn't decided anything yet, but families of victims of two crashes in 2018 and 2019 are also insisting on criminal prosecution, and demanding the harshest punishment for the American manufacturer—a fine of \$24.9 billion.

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In 2018, a Lion Air flight on a Boeing 737 Max 8 crashed 13 minutes after take off, killing all 189 people on board. In March 2019, another Boeing 737 Max 8—this time an Ethiopian Airlines flight—crashed minutes after taking off with 157 people.

The two eerily similar incidents were caused by a faulty system that Boeing had designed, without training pilots or disclosing its flaws to the FAA. The pilots operating the Lion Air flight kept trying to find a solution in their manual as the plane nose-dived—but the manual provided nothing of use.

Initially, Boeing blamed the pilots and threw Lion Air under the bus. Bloomberg's [Peter Robison](#) wrote in 2021, "The empathy Boeing's aviators might have had for a pilot who looked

like them wasn't being extended to [Lion Air captain Bhavye] Suneja and [copilot] Harvino.”

The second crash made it clear that it was a Boeing problem, one they it was alleged they had been trying hard to ignore and hide. Its 737 Max 8 planes were grounded for 20 months, and the company was taken to court. Sadly for the families of victims, the case settled in 2021 with a slap on wrist—a [\\$2.5 billion settlement](#) for defrauding regulators. Around 70% of this settlement went to the airlines, which Boeing had already agreed to before the judgement.

Under the agreement, Boeing wouldn't face criminal prosecution for three years if no other problems occurred. But the door plug blowing off an Alaska Airline flight just before this decree expired this year has opened the door for another possible criminal prosecution.

The Alaska door plug incident in January was also not a lone event. Boeing planes have been malfunctioning all over the world, with engines catching fire and tires falling off, but fortunately, no fatality has been reported. Google “Boeing” and “Emergency Landing” and you'll see reports of its planes scaring the bejesus out of pilots and passengers. The FAA has said that the company has problems in its production processes and more recently, it is investigating [counterfeit titanium](#) used in aircrafts built by both Boeing and its biggest rival Airbus.

It's baffling—and frightening—that the FAA has admitted to a [hands-off approach](#) with Boeing that contributed to the screw ups. After the deaths of 346 people, a more micro-managerial approach would have far more warranted.

Related: [Can You Avoid Sitting Next to a Door Plug on an Aircraft?](#)

Boeing whistleblowers have long claimed that the company ignored safety procedures to make money and anyone who made a noise about its safety issues faced retaliation within the company. Ed Pierson was a senior manager at Boeing's 737 program and told the [Los Angeles Times](#), “I would absolutely not fly a Max airplane.” Adding, “I've worked in the factory where they were built, and I saw the pressure employees were under to rush the planes out the door. I tried to get them to shut down before the first crash.”

Related: [Former Boeing Engineer: Ground All Boeing Dreamliner Aircraft](#)

Plane crashes aren't common. But the information that has come to light in recent weeks is evidence that the system that built the aerospace company as a giant and fed its corporate greed is broken. Now the murky skies over Boeing's airspace is also causing turbulence in space.

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