

Global Warming Alliance warns accident risk due to aircraft design weakness

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A climate change organisation which researches wind and hurricane intensification due to global warming has criticised authorities for not doing enough to protect airline passengers and their crews.

They warn that unless aircraft control systems are not redesigned to handle the stronger winds now more common, accidents in the critical final approach stage of landing will increase.

‘The maximum crosswind limits have only increased on Boeing aircraft by 7 knots since the beginning of the jet age,’ says Donald Burfitt-Dons, Chairman of the Global Warming Alliance and a former airline pilot. ‘The control systems are designed to cope with a 30 to 35 knot crosswind on landing. That is no longer sufficient’. He is urging an immediate review of safety standards to ensure future aircraft can handle the meteorological conditions of today. Ship engineers also need to look at rudder control limitations in order for vessels particularly high sided ones, to maintain directional control in the hurricane strength winds now being encountered often in straits with limited room to manoeuvre.

‘Brussels and Washington should be working together to set out new guidelines for future aircraft and ship design to cope with the increasing wind strengths now being seen around the world.’

He quotes as an example the recent Lufthansa flight from Munich with 137 passengers on board, which scraped the runway when trying to land in a crosswind of 35 gusting 55 knots at Hamburg Airport, outside the present limits. ‘No one seems to be looking at the underlying reason why these accidents are happening,’ said Donald Burfitt-Dons. ‘Ships and aircraft have been designed for less demanding conditions than those we are now seeing around the world.’

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The Global Warming Alliance is a not-for-profit research and campaigning organization committed to combating climate change

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