

Release #10.036
August 31, 2010

Continental Crew to Receive ALPA's Superior Airmanship Award
Pilots Recognized for Safely Handling In-Flight Loss of Engine

WASHINGTON—Continental Airlines Capt. Brent O. Black of Castle Rock, Colorado, Capt. Steven Wycoff of Hercules, California, and First Officer Daniel N. Montgomery of Arlington, Texas, will be honored by the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA), for their superb handling of an engine failure shortly after takeoff last year. The three pilots will receive the Association's Superior Airmanship Award on August 31 at ALPA's 56th Air Safety Forum Awards Dinner in Washington, D.C.

Capt. Jay Pierce, chairman of the ALPA unit representing Continental pilots, congratulated the pilots, saying, "These gentlemen represent the high level of skill and professionalism characteristic of premier airline pilots. Their ability to calmly and capably address the emergency situation is testament to their training and considerable talents."

Capt. Black and F/O Montgomery were the pilots of Continental Flight 348, Boeing 757-300 service from Newark, New Jersey to San Francisco on April 26, 2009. The airplane was full, carrying 215 passengers, one lap child, five flight attendants, one cabin jumpseater, and Capt. Wycoff (like Capt. Black, a Boeing 757 captain) riding in the cockpit jumpseat. With enough fuel for the transcontinental flight, the airplane had a total weight for takeoff of almost 267,000 pounds, nearly the maximum takeoff weight allowed for the airplane.

In Newark that afternoon, the air temperature was unseasonably high—90 degrees Fahrenheit. Because warm air is less dense than colder air, warm air reduces engine thrust and wing lift; the airliner's heavy weight and the high temperature required a full-power takeoff.

At about 400--500 feet above the ground, the pilots heard a loud "bang," like a shotgun blast. The airplane's nose started to swing to the left, and the cockpit displays immediately showed complete loss of thrust from the left engine. The red "fire warning" lights were lit, the fire warning bell was blaring, and the red "left engine fire" warning was displayed. Now only the right engine powered the heavy airliner.

As F/O Montgomery kept the airplane under control and climbing in the appropriate direction, Capt. Black silenced the aural fire warning and declared an emergency to air traffic control. The pilots concentrated on extinguishing the engine fire, securing the engine, and the engine-out flight profile.

Capt. Black quickly assigned F/O Montgomery to continue flying the airplane. He told Capt. Wycoff to brief the flight attendants and Continental's Operations Department on the emergency and to tell them that they would be returning to Newark immediately. Capt. Black coordinated the emergency return to Newark with air traffic controllers and completed the engine failure/fire checklist.

"The crew flew a flawless single-engine approach to an overweight landing with a very high approach speed to account for the high landing weight," said Capt. John Prater, president of

ALPA. “The harrowing 12-minute flight ended with no injuries to any of the 225 people on board—the ultimate measure of the three pilots’ skill, training, teamwork, and professionalism.”

Founded in 1931, ALPA is the world’s largest pilots union, representing nearly 53,000 pilots at 38 airlines in the United States and Canada.

###

CONTACT: ALPA Communications, 703/481-4440 or media@alpa.org