

# Bloomberg

---

## Airline Crash Deaths Rose 13% to 828 Last Year, Worse Than Decade Average

By Andrea Rothman - Jan 4, 2011

Airliner crashes killed 828 people last year, 13 percent more than in 2009, as the number of fatal accidents rose by five to 28, a study released today shows.

The fatality figure was 4 percent worse than last decade's annual average of 794 deaths, aviation consultant Ascend said in a report. The highest toll involved a [Boeing Co.](#) 737 flown by Air India Express, which overshot the runway on landing in Mangalore in May, killing 152 passengers and six crew.

While the four worst crashes, accounting for 472 deaths, or 65 percent of the total, involved western-built jets, they also featured carriers from emerging economies where infrastructure is more basic, precision-landing gear may be absent, the natural environment is often hazardous and corporate oversight is less developed, Ascend safety director [Paul Hayes](#) said from [London](#).

"Worldwide, you have an accident rate of a bit more than one for every million flights," Hayes said in a telephone interview. "But if you look at Western Europe or [North America](#) it's probably closer to one in 15 million."

Fatal incidents last year included the crash of an Airbus SAS A321 operated by [Pakistan's](#) Airblue, which hit an Islamabad hillside in July killing the 146 passengers and six crew, and one involving an Airbus A330 widebody flown by [Libya's](#) Afriqiyah Airways, which came down on its final approach to Tripoli airport in May, killing all but one of the 104 people on board.

An Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 737 also crashed into the sea after taking off from [Beirut](#), Lebanon, last January, claiming the lives of the flight's 82 passengers and eight crew.

### Airports Lacking

While modern planes have instruments that offer the pilot a "glide path" and guidance on the altitude at each stage of the approach, such gear only works if a terminal is equipped with reciprocal technology. Studies have shown that about three-quarters of instrument-landing systems are in Western Europe and North America, and that accidents on landing are eight or nine times more likely

at airports lacking the equipment, Hayes said.

The age of an aircraft isn't a major factor in crashes, Ascend said. Last year, more than 90 percent of traffic was carried by western-built jets, which suffered eight fatal accidents resulting in almost 70 percent of total fatalities.

For insurers, liabilities and hull losses came to \$2.15 billion in 2010, more than the \$2.1 billion value of premiums. The most expensive event was a fire at a warehouse owned by [Saudi Arabian Airlines](#), with didn't involve any loss of life.

Losses have matched or exceeded the value of incoming business for four straight years, at a cost of \$900 million, and the insurance industry needs to increase charges, Hayes said.

Even with last year's numbers, the long-term safety trend among airlines is positive, with fatal accidents in the decade just ended averaging 27.2 a year, down from 37.6 in the 1990s. 2009 was the safest year on record, with 731 deaths.

"Air safety is still improving, and this has resulted in 100 fewer fatal accidents during that last decade than in the 1990s," Hayes said.

To contact the reporter on this story: Andrea Rothman in Paris at [aerothman@bloomberg.net](mailto:aerothman@bloomberg.net)

To contact the editor responsible for this story: Benedikt Kammell at [bkammell@bloomberg.net](mailto:bkammell@bloomberg.net)

---

©2011 BLOOMBERG L.P. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.