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Airline Insurance Claims Tumble 45% in Safest Year, Ascend Says

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By Neil Denslow

Jan. 4 (Bloomberg) -- Global airlines' insurance claims fell 45 percent to the lowest in seven years in 2011, as the industry posted its safest year according to Ascend.

The cost of incurred airline hull and legal liability losses for 2011 dropped by about \$966 million to \$1.18 billion, Ascend, a unit of London-based Elsevier Plc, said in a Jan. 3 statement on its website. About 400 people died in airline accidents last year, based on figures in the statement.

The industry posted the lowest fatal-accident and passenger-death rates on record in 2011 as safety standards increased and air travel grew. Flying is now about twice as safe as it was 15 years ago, it said.

"It's the safest year ever," Paul Hayes, Ascend's director of safety, said in the statement. "Airlines are getting safer -- and more quickly than they are expanding."

Last year's worst crash happened July 8, when 83 people died after a Hewa Bora Airways Boeing Co. 727-100 undershot the runway on landing at Kisangani, Congo, Ascend said. Another 35 people survived.

Other fatal incidents included an Iran Air Boeing 727-200 crash that killed 69 people in Orumiyeh, Iran, in January. A Rusair Tupolev TU134 crashed near Petrozavodsk, Russia, killed 45 people in June.

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