

## FLYING SAFER IN 2008

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U.S. commercial aviation achieved a record second consecutive year with no fatal accidents in 2008, and it was one of the safest years worldwide for air travel, the British aviation consulting firm Ascend said in its year-end report.

The U.S. safety performance in 2008 is one of only five years in the past 50 in which no fatalities were reported aboard U.S. scheduled commercial airliners, National Transportation Safety Board records show.

Worldwide fatalities dropped 25 percent in 2008, to 539 reported passenger and crew deaths, Ascend reported. However, there were 28 fatal accidents worldwide in 2008 compared with 24 in 2007.

"These are very reassuring statistics," said Paul Hayes, director of Ascend. "The chances of dying in a serious air accident have reduced significantly."

Reasons include improved technology for frames, engines and electronics such as warnings pilots receive if aircraft are on collision courses; pilot and controller procedures; and a continued government and airline focus on safety.

The only major U.S. accident in 2008 occurred Dec. 20 in Denver when a Continental Airlines Boeing 737 with 110 passengers and a crew of five skidded off the runway on an aborted takeoff and caught fire, injuring 38 people.

The worst accident in 2008 was the Spanair MD-80 crash in August in Madrid, Spain, when 149 of 166 passengers and five of six crew members died after the aircraft apparently stalled on takeoff and crashed.

No other accidents occurred in which more than 100 people were killed, and only two others occurred when more than 50 died, Ascend reported.