

CRASH and walk away

It might be possible, especially if you're prepared for emergencies and travel with trained flight attendants.



What can you do now to increase your survival chances should the unthinkable occur on one of your flights? "Be aware and be prepared is the best advice I can give a passenger," said Cyndee Irvine, who was a PSA Airlines flight attendant for 10 years and has been a contract flight attendant for the past decade.

Irvine said most passengers don't understand the concept of bracing for an emergency landing to protect their back and neck. "If you're facing the captain, put your head down and grab behind your knees," she advised. "If you're facing backward, you should sit up and put your hands under your knees or thighs. If the aircraft stops abruptly, the seatback and headrest will help absorb the shock.

"There's a trick to exiting through a small emergency exit," Irvine continued. "You have to put one leg out first, then your body, then the other leg, so you maintain your balance. Falling, with others pushing behind you, is not an option."

On some aircraft, the best way to use an emergency exit isn't obvious. On the Gulfstream

550, for example, there's often a credenza by the over-wing exit. "You have to use the 'sit, spin, rollover and push' maneuver," Irvine said. "You sit on the credenza, spin so your legs go out the window, then roll over on your stomach and push out legs first."

Irvine cautioned that passengers exiting an aircraft after an emergency landing should leave their belongings behind. "Don't try to

can coordinate with crew members in an emergency. We empower them to respond appropriately to a given emergency rather than freeze and wait. We also teach them they have to give up their executive attitude and take orders instead of give them."

The company will take the \$6,250 session to the customer. "We tell them this is a three-hour course," Mykol said, "but it often stretches to five hours because of the questions."

Besides taking such a course, the best thing you can do to ensure your safety in an emergency is to travel with a skilled flight attendant. "We're trained to work under pressure—the very time when passengers need assistance the most," Irvine said. "We'll tell you to do things, such as take off your glasses and put them in your sock; remove sharp

objects, such as a pen, from your pockets; and for women, we make sure they break off the heel on their high-heel shoes. You can't try to evacuate an aircraft wearing high heels!"

Unfortunately, many business jets do not carry flight attendants who can give this advice. "An aircraft with fewer than 20 passengers is not required to have a trained flight attendant," said Susan Friedenber, president of Philadelphia-based Corporate Flight Attendant Training and Services. "And sometimes, if there is [an attendant] in the cabin, that person may have no training. You should make a point of asking what training they've had. I've never understood why the lives of 19 passengers aboard an aircraft are less important than the lives of 20 passengers aboard an aircraft.

"A trained flight attendant is the first responder in the cabin when there's an emergency," Friedenber added. "It is 'penny-wise and pound foolish' to fly with no flight attendant, or worse, someone who has no training. Someone with no training can just get in the way and cause more problems." □

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carry things with you," she said. "You'll block the emergency exit or drop [what you're carrying] and people will trip on it, especially if the cabin is filled with smoke."

Doug Mykol, president of AirCare Solutions Group in Olympia, Wash., has developed an Executive Frequent Flyer program designed to communicate such lessons. "Passenger ignorance is a liability for crew members," Mykol said. "We educate and turn them into assets."

The program includes 45 minutes of classroom instruction on the basics of flight, what the crew does and what to expect when flying. Mykol brings a simulator so students can experience evacuation from a smoke-filled cabin.

"Then we discuss what can happen in an accident and how training can save you," he said. "We show them how to operate the equipment on their own aircraft, let them put out a fire with an extinguisher and focus on how they

Using simulator equipment (at left and above), passengers learn what to do in an emergency. Such training "can save you," said AirCare Solutions president Doug Mykol.

