



PASSENGERS FRUSTRATED WITH AIR CANADA AFTER EMERGENCY LANDING

News / Airlines



Two families whose Air Canada flight declared an emergency on the way to Arizona say they are frustrated in trying to deal with the airline afterwards.

Lisa Zayac and her husband thought they were going to die, and said good-bye through oxygen masks. George Papp wondered whether the Airbus 319 would break up.

And while the aircraft landed smoothly and safely in Albuquerque in the Dec. 19 incident, both now say they airline owes them some plain talking.

Zayac, a teacher in Winnipeg, told herself during the flight: "This is not how we die. This is not how our life ends.

"As someone who is seven months pregnant, this was a beyond terrifying experience to have my

husband sitting beside me red-faced, tears in his eyes, saying his final goodbyes to me as we both thought this was the end for us,” she wrote to the Citizen.

She said in an interview that her husband told her: “I’ll see you on the other side.”

In the “eerily silent” aircraft she had “an overwhelming feeling of helplessness because all we could do was sit there.”

She says the passengers were left to cope on their own in Albuquerque: A shuttle bus didn’t show up, and it was hard to get information about their replacement flight the next day.

“I cannot believe the utter audacity Air Canada has in ignoring their passengers in a time of crisis,” she said.

George Papp of Montreal was flying with his wife and two young children. First their ears popped and the air turned cold. He and his wife wondered what was up.

Then the oxygen masks fell.

“Our six-year-old and our three-year-old were crying all the way down,” he said. “Try to put a mask on a three-year-old.

“There was five minutes of quiet (from the pilot) with some codes that the pilot was using on the PA system.

“They didn’t ask us to brace for impact. That was the best part of it all. Seriously. Then there was the five minutes of silence where your mind goes crazy.”

It was dark outside and Papp couldn’t tell what was happening.

“He (the pilot) finally came on and said the situation has been stabilized so that was reassuring. But he said to keep the masks on.”

The landing was problem-free, and a few hours later the airline found them a hotel. They flew to Phoenix a day later.

Papp feels his questions aren’t getting proper answers. He received an offer of a discount on future flights, “which seems a little odd considering our experience and the amount of stress we all had to endure.”

“The crew handled it wonderfully, but I just want to know why it happened.”

Air Canada said in an email the problem was “a mechanical issue with a pressurization valve.” It said passengers should call the airline’s customer relations department.

On Thursday, Papp got a reply from customers relations blaming a pressurization issue. It ends: “Thank you for this final opportunity to review the file.”

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