

Pilot Fatigue: Sleepy Air Canada Pilot Mistakes Venus for Airplane



An exhausted Air Canada pilot mistook the planet Venus for an airplane and sent the plane into a rapid 400 foot descent in order to prevent an imaginary collision from occurring, according to an official report released Monday. Canada's Transportation Safety Board released the statement which read:

“Under the effects of significant sleep inertia (when performance and situational awareness are degraded immediately after waking up), the first officer perceived the oncoming aircraft as being on a collision course and began a descent to avoid it.”

The unfortunate event occurred at night on board a Boeing 767 twin passenger plane flying from Toronto to Zurich 95 passengers and a crew of 8 aboard. According to reports, the first officer had just awaked from a long nap. According to the report, in a disoriented state:

“The FO (First Officer) initially mistook the planet Venus for an aircraft but the captain advised again that the target was at the 12 o'clock position (straight ahead) and 1,000 feet below.”

No one on the plane was wearing their seat belts, despite the “fasten your seat belt” indicator being turned, which resulted in the subsequent injury of 14 passengers and 2 crew members. Seven required medical treatment and were taken to the hospital. Air Canada expressed their sincerest apologies to the passengers injured in the accident and explained that they are currently in the process of taking the steps requisite in order to avoid a recurrence. Their approach is simply to remind pilots to follow the rules regarding taking naps during flights and increased efforts to heighten crew awareness to the effects of pilot fatigue.