

Video of Snow-Covered Aeroflot Wing Goes Viral Amid Air Safety Fears

April 11, 2012

The  Moscow Times

A January 5 video shows snow flying from the wing of an Aeroflot plane during takeoff.

An online video of an Aeroflot jet taking off from Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport with a snow-caked wing has gone viral amid passenger jitters over air safety following the deadly crash of a plane in icy conditions earlier this month.

The 1 minute, 40 second video shows snow covering large swathes of the wing and the extended flaps of an Airbus A320 as it speeds down the runway at Sheremetyevo. The snow is blown off the wing as the plane lifts off the ground.

The person who posted the video on YouTube, identified only as svoavia, said the plane was filmed out of one of its windows as it took off on Jan. 1 for a flight to St. Petersburg.

Aeroflot denied that the flight had ever been in jeopardy.

"It's clear from the video that there were no violations," Aeroflot said in a [Twitter message](#).

"The snow was instantly blown away at the start of takeoff and therefore definitely didn't affect aerodynamics and safety. Safety is our top priority!"

Aeroflot, which was responding to a Twitter user's tweet of the YouTube video, said its reply was made after consultations with two key officials — its director of air safety and its deputy head of operations.

But airline industry insiders expressed horror at the video and Aeroflot's response.

"Unbelievable, I can't believe that this is still happening. Reckless behavior by the flight crew," wrote one on an industry forum called Professional Pilots Rumour Network.

"Which airline is this?" wrote another. "I will add it to my 'Do not touch with a bargepole' list."

"It's difficult to assess if it's just powder snow or snow with ice underneath," said a third. "In our company this is not allowed. Takeoff with frost, ice, snow or other contaminants on critical surfaces, flight control or lifting surfaces are not permitted. All vents, inlets, control-wing surfaces and horizontal stabilizer must be free of any contaminants."

"Anyway," he added, "[it's] a sad day for aviation to see a genuine operator do this."

The video was posted on YouTube on Jan. 5 but only went viral this week after Russian investigators said that failure to de-ice a UTair plane before takeoff was the most likely cause of a crash in Siberia that killed 31 people on April 2. The twin turboprop ATR 72-200 craft, carrying 43 people, tilted to its right side and then sharply left as it crashed shortly after takeoff from Tyumen in western Siberia.

Russia ranked as the most dangerous country in the world in which to fly in 2011, with nine crashes claiming 140 lives. That topped even the Democratic Republic of Congo for aircraft-related fatalities.

But Aeroflot has a good safety record and has not been involved in a fatal accident since 2008, when a Boeing 737 flight operated by its subsidiary Aeroflot-Nord crashed on approach to the Perm airport, killing all 88 people on board. Pilot error was blamed for the accident, with fatigue and the consumption of alcohol by the pilot cited as contributing factors.

After the crash, Aeroflot removed its name from the airline and rebranded it as Nordavia.

In 2008, an Aeroflot pilot was [removed](#) from a New York-bound plane in Moscow after passengers, including socialite Ksenia Sobchak, accused him of being drunk. The airline later said tests revealed no signs of intoxication and the pilot might have suffered a stroke.

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