

Christine James-Villanueva  
Director – IOC Operations Support & Planning  
Christine.james-villanueva@aa.com

April 8, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

Docket OST-1996-1960  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Docket Management Facility  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Kim Frierson  
Coordinator, Transportation Disaster Operations  
National Transportation Safety Board  
Transportation Disaster Assistance Division  
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, SW  
Washington, DC 20594

Re: Updated American Airlines Family Assistance Plan

Dear Mr. Nick Zigelmier and Ms. Kim Frierson:

Enclosed is the current American Airlines Family Assistance Plan, filed in accordance with the provisions of 49 U.S.C. §§ 41113 and 1136, and the Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act. The enclosed plan has updated our assurances, based on the FAA Reauthorization Act, to remove Compass Airlines from the list of carriers operating as American Eagle.

If you have any questions about the enclosed plan, please contact me.

Sincerely,



Christine James-Villanueva

Enclosure

cc: Elias Kontanis, NTSB (via electronic mail)  
Maria Rivero, DOT (via electronic mail)

## **Family Assistance Plan**

This Plan was developed in accordance with the provisions of 49 U.S.C. §§ 41113 and 1136, and the Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996, as amended, and will be utilized by American Airlines and carriers doing business as American Eagle.

**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)**

## **Introduction**

The American Airlines Family Assistance Plan\* ("the Plan") incorporates family assistance-related elements of the American Airlines Emergency Response Manual ("ERM") and the Local Station Emergency Plan ("LSEP"), and describes how American Airlines and carriers doing business as American Eagle\* ("the Airline") will provide assistance to passengers' family members after an accident\*\* The Plan complies with the requirements of 49 U.S.C. §§ 41113 and 1136.

The Airline will allocate resources sufficient to provide family assistance in the event of an accident, including retention of certain vendors possessing expertise in specialized family assistance services. All Airline personnel providing passenger\*\*\* and/or family assistance will be trained in crisis response, and will be required to demonstrate compassion, technical expertise and professionalism.

\*The Plan also applies to the following carriers operating as American Eagle: Envoy; Mesa Air; Piedmont Airlines; PSA Airlines; Republic Airline Inc.; and SkyWest Airlines.

\*\*The term "accident" refers to an air carrier or foreign air carrier and resulting in any loss of life, and for which the National Transportation Safety Board will serve as the lead investigative agency.

\*\*\* The term "passenger" includes—

- (A) an employee of an air carrier or foreign air carrier aboard an aircraft;
- (B) any other person aboard the aircraft without regard to whether the person paid for the transportation, occupied a seat, or held a reservation for the flight.; any other person injured or killed in the aircraft accident, as determined appropriate by the Board.

**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)****Principles of Family Assistance**

The Airline subscribes to the following principles regarding assistance provided to passengers and family members:

- Passengers and families shall be treated with dignity and respect.
- The cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity of those involved shall be respected and accommodated wherever possible.
- Information shall be provided as promptly as possible.
- Wherever possible and appropriate, the airline will endeavor to meet the needs of the passengers and families.

**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)**

**Commitment of Sufficient Resources**

The Airline maintains corporate, departmental, and local emergency response and family assistance programs that utilize a broad spectrum of human and technological resources in the event of an accident. During such crises, employees are assigned to functions including family assistance, accident investigation, media relations, and liaison with government agencies and support organizations. The Airline's resources are directed through a command center network linked by worldwide communications.

The Airline establishes cooperative working relationships between all internal and external organizations involved in the crisis, and has specifically designed its emergency response structure to allow separate management of the crisis and continued safe operation of the Airline.

**Initial Notification to the National Transportation Safety Board ("NTSB")**

The Airline's Flight Safety Department is responsible for the accident notification to the NTSB Communications Center at 202-314-6290.

The American Airlines Emergency Planning & Response department will provide a courtesy notification to the NTSB Communications Center requesting that the Transportation Disaster Assistance team be notified of the accident.

**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)****Humanitarian Response Team**

The Airline's humanitarian response team for assisting passengers and/or family members is known as the Customer Assistance Relief Effort (CARE) Team. Comprised of specially-trained volunteer employees, CARE provides a conduit of communication between the Airline and passengers and/or family members following an accident, and facilitates necessary responsibilities.

The Airline conducts training for new CARE Team members, as well as periodic recurrent training for all personnel identified as CARE Team members. The Airline also conducts periodic emergency drills to ensure comprehensive response and preparedness. Topics addressed during training include:

- Roles of CARE Team personnel, and the importance of family assistance after an accident;
- Elements of aviation accidents;
- Crisis communication skills;
- Family notification and initial contact process;
- Grief process;
- Support and logistics;
- Media relations; and
- Provision and consideration for the well-being of all team members

**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)**

**Uniform Provision of Assistance**

The Airline provides uniform family assistance without regard to an individual's status as a revenue customer, non-revenue passenger, ground victim, or other victim of the accident.

In the event the Airline voluntarily provides family assistance to United States citizens within the United States as a result of an accident occurring outside the United States, the Airline will coordinate with appropriate personnel within the National Transportation Safety Board and the Department of State.

**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)****Managing Telephone Inquiries**

The Airline will establish and publicize a dedicated toll-free telephone number with sufficient telephone capacity promptly after it has been confirmed that an aircraft operated by the Airline or doing business as the Airline has been involved in an accident. When disseminating the toll-free number, the Airline will ask the media to inform the public that the number should be used by individuals who have a reason to believe a family member or friend is aboard the accident aircraft.

The toll-free number will be staffed by the Reservations Department, which is comprised of specially trained reservations agents. Emergency calls will be given the highest call answering priority.

Reservations representatives will answer questions, provide information authorized for release by the Airline, and gather relevant information. They will also have access to a preliminary passenger manifest for the purpose of identifying callers whose family members are believed to be aboard the accident flight.

Once such callers are identified, a second group of volunteers who are fully CARE Team trained and known as the RES CARE Team will establish contact as rapidly as possible with the immediate family of those believed to be aboard. The Airline will then provide a separate toll-free number to passengers and/or family members which can reach the RES CARE Team directly.



**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)**

**Notification and Preliminary Passenger List**

For notification purposes, the Airline utilizes a preliminary passenger manifest comprised of passenger names and seat numbers.

The Airline rapidly distributes the preliminary passenger manifest internally so the notification process can proceed while the list is further verified. Verification involves comparing ticket coupons and other verifying data at the departure airport to the list of those individuals holding reservations or desiring standby space aboard the flight. The Airline will provide passenger information to family members as it becomes known and will not wait until all names on the preliminary passenger manifest are verified before notifying individual family members. Family members will be notified if passenger's name appears on the preliminary passenger manifest and informed that further verification is necessary.

Internal distribution of the preliminary passenger manifest and associated Passenger Name Records (PNRs) initiates the process of determining the passengers' next-of-kin and establishing contact. This process includes identifying callers who have family members believed to be aboard the accident aircraft as described above, making outbound calls where contact data is available, and in-person notifications, to the extent reasonably practicable.

Once contact is established it will be maintained, including specific CARE Team Members dedicated to each passenger and family. After the immediate needs of the family members have been addressed following the accident, the family will be provided a contact name and telephone number with the airline for future requests for assistance.

**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)****Provision of Passenger List**

Immediately upon request, the Airline will provide a copy of the passenger manifest, based on the best information available at the time, to the NTSB Director of Family Support Services and the organization designated under 49 U.S.C. § 1136(a)(2) as having primary responsibility for coordinating the emotional care and support of the families. The Airline will periodically update and re-issue the passenger manifest as additional, confirmed information is received. Each copy will be conspicuously numbered or annotated with the date and time so it may be distinguished from previous copies.

The Airline will transmit a list of the names of confirmed foreign nationals to the Department of State to facilitate interaction with appropriate foreign government personnel.

**Release of Passenger Names**

The Airline will not release the Confirmed Manifest to the public, absent the presence of extenuating circumstances. Any decision to publicly release the Confirmed Manifest will be made by the Airline's senior executives based on an evaluation of the underlying circumstances.

Prior to any public release of the Confirmed Manifest, the Airline will verify that all passengers' families have been notified. To the extent possible, the Airline will honor requests by families not to release the names of their family members.

**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)**

**Family Travel to Accident Location**

The Airline will assist passengers' families in traveling to the location of the accident and will provide for the physical care of the families during their stay, including but not limited to transportation to the accident site or hospital location, lodging, meals, security, communications, and incidental expenses. A RES CARE individual will maintain daily contact with families who elect not to travel to the accident location until the on-scene investigation has concluded.

In order to assist family members as they travel to and from the accident location, the Airline will notify flight crews and airport personnel of family members aboard particular flights. At departure, connecting, and arrival airports, dedicated CARE Team members will meet with and assist family members.

If requested, the Airline will work with the responsible authorities, including the NTSB, to arrange site visits by family members, as may be appropriate. Access to the accident site may be limited by terrain and/or hazardous materials concerns, security measures, or other unforeseen conditions.

**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)****Security and Assistance at the Location of the Accident**

To the extent practicable, the Airline will secure suitable facilities at departure, arrival and connecting airports for family members who may be initially gathering. These secure facilities will enable family members to achieve some privacy, and facilitate the provision of updates regarding the reconciliation of the passenger manifest and other accident information.

The Airline will also establish a facility near the accident site to be used as a Family Assistance Center. The Airline will make provision for a Joint Family Support Operations Center to include space, communication, and logistical support for the local and federal staff.

The Airline will assign CARE Team members trained in crisis response to meet privately with family members once they arrive at the accident location.

The Airline will assist family members as they depart the accident location and maintain contact until no longer appropriate. After the immediate needs of the family members have been addressed following the accident, the family will be provided a contact name and telephone number with the airline for future requests for assistance.

The Airline will coordinate family access to briefings held by the NTSB or other government agencies. An Airline team will be assigned to the accident location with the equipment and procedures in place to identify and properly badge family members who elect to participate in the family assistance activities at the accident site.

**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)**

**NTSB Public Hearings**

In the case of an accident in which the NTSB conducts a public hearing or comparable proceeding at a location greater than 80 miles from the accident site, the Airline will ensure that the proceeding is made available simultaneously at a location open to the public at the origin and destination cities of the subject flight, if those cities are in the United States.

**Disposition of Remains and Personal Effects**

Recovery, identification, and disposition of remains are the responsibility of the local medical examiner, coroner, or other designated authority. The Airline will comply with decisions made by the responsible authority, and will, to the extent practicable, consult with and communicate families' preferences regarding the disposition and handling of passenger remains.

The Airline will retain vendors experienced in recovery and restoration of personal effects. The Airline, or a representative of its vendor, will consult with families regarding belongings within the Airline's control that are identified as passenger possessions.

Personal effects will be offered for return to the families, regardless of their condition, unless required for the accident investigation or any criminal investigation.

Unclaimed personal effects will be retained by the Airline or its vendor for a period of at least 18 months.

**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)****Association with Designated Organization**

In the case of an aircraft accident where the NTSB and responsible organization respond, the Airline will establish a liaison with any organization designated under section 1136(a) (2) of Title VII, Section 703 of the Federal Aviation Reauthorization Act of 1996 on an ongoing basis to ensure that passenger and family members receive an appropriate level of services and assistance following such accident.

The Airline's CARE Team Members will inquire whether passenger and/or family members desire assistance from the designated organization responsible for family care and mental health, and will coordinate such assistance with that organization.

**Compensation of Designated Organization**

The Airline will provide reasonable compensation to the organization designated by the Chairman of the NTSB under 49 U.S.C. § 1136(a)(2), if requested by that organization following an accident. The organization shall submit to the Airline for approval a summary of its planned activities and anticipated expenses prior to the organization's mobilization or provision of such services.

Changes to the organization's planned activities and unanticipated expenses shall be coordinated with the Airline's designated point of contact for family assistance.

The organization will provide the Airline with invoices and itemized listings of services and expenses.

**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)**

**Monuments**

The Airline will consult with passenger and/or the family of each passenger about construction by the Airline of any monument to the passengers, including any inscription on the monument.

Should a monument be constructed, the Airline will consider all feedback from passengers and/or families along with the statutory and/or regulatory requirements or considerations of the place of construction. While it is preferable to have every passenger and/or families agree with the specific design, it may not be possible to obtain a full consensus. To avoid lengthy delays, the Airline will implement a plan agreeable to the majority of the families.

Each family will be given the option of including their passenger's name if an inscription of the names is incorporated in the design. Passengers and/or next-of-kin will be given an opportunity to visit the monument when construction is complete.

**American Airlines Family Assistance Plan (as on file with D.O.T.)****Property Damage**

If an accident results in damage to a manmade structure or other property on the ground that is not government-owned, the Airline will: Promptly provide, to the extent practicable, written notice to the property owner regarding any liability for property damage and means for obtaining compensation. The notice shall advise an owner:

- To contact the insurer of the property as the authoritative source for information about coverage and compensation;
- To not rely on unofficial information offered by air carrier representatives about compensation by the air carrier for accident-site property damage; and
- To obtain photographic or other detailed evidence of property damage as soon as possible after the accident, consistent with access restrictions at the site.

**Contact**

The principal point of contact regarding American Airlines Family Assistance Plan is:

Christine James-Villanueva  
American Airlines  
Director, IOC Operations Support & Planning  
13800 Airport Freeway, MD 660  
Fort Worth, TX 76155  
Phone: (682) 315-4700  
Cell: 817-235-8736  
Email: Christine.James-Villanueva@aa.com