



Am I flying on a 737 MAX?

TDI | Manama

Flight desks all around the globe are being swamped with this particular question for the past few days.

Am I flying on a 737 MAX?

Responding to requests, some like the Southwest Airlines allowed passengers to re-book at no charges, which, however, is not the case with several others like the American Airlines which demands a charge.

The latest news, however, is that many of the pilots and flight crew have grown increasingly cautious about the make of their ride following the crash of Ethiopian Airlines 737 MAX 8 on Sunday which killed all 157 passengers and crew.

Voicing support, the Airline Personnel Union (APFA), which represents American Airlines employees, has told its members not to board a 737 MAX 8 if they do not feel safe.

Even though, the US President Donald Trump also weighed in with a tweet on Tuesday saying: "Airplanes are becoming far too complex to fly."

"Pilots are no longer needed,

but rather computer scientists from MIT," he wrote, referring to the prestigious university.

Trump later Wednesday announced a plan to ground all Boeing 737 MAX aircraft amid intense international and political pressure following the second deadly crash in less than five months.

"We're going to be issuing an emergency order of prohibition regarding all flights of the 737 MAX 8 and 737 MAX 9," Trump told reporters the White House.

Will it affect the Gulf?

The news has also pushed Civil Aviation authorities in the Middle East to high alert with the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt and Oman banning Boeing's 737 MAX jet from their airspace. The UAE's General Civil Aviation Authority said the move was a "precautionary measure aimed at protecting public safety," state news agency WAM reported.

Budget airline flydubai said it had grounded 13 of its aircraft and would

operate flights using alternative Boeing jets in its fleet. Flydubai, in a statement, confirmed that it had grounded its fleet of 11 MAX 8 and two MAX 9 aircraft following

"Flydubai is adjusting its schedule to minimise disruption to passengers and will operate flights with its fleet of next-generation Boeing 737-800 aircraft," a spokesperson said.

"Where there are flight cancellations flydubai will contact passengers directly."

The spokesperson added: "Flydubai continues to be in touch with the manufacturer and regulator."

Saudi unaffected

Saudi Arabia does not have Boeing 737 MAX planes in its own aircraft registry, an official with the civil aviation authority. "The skies of the kingdom are clear of this type of planes," he said.

Kuwait bans

Kuwait also banned the aircraft because "it seems that this type of airplane is facing a technical problem," said Imad Jalalou, deputy head of the country's aviation safety department. "We are waiting for information from the manufacturing company that confirms the safety of the plane," he said.

The authority said that "the operation of Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft have been suspended for all flights including overflights until further notice."

Oman suspends

Oman announced earlier Tuesday it would temporarily suspend operations of the 737 MAX aircraft, in a Twitter post by Muscat's Public Authority for Civil Aviation.

The sultanate's national carrier, Oman Air, has five Boeing MAX aircraft in its fleet, according to the airline's website.

Oman Air's statement said that it is currently rescheduling flights affected by this decision. It will inform passengers of all the flights to be cancelled,

Bahrain joins 737 ban

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Mohammed Zafran

The operation of Boeing B737 MAX aircrafts across Bahrain airspace has been suspended as a precautionary measure, it was revealed.

According to the Civil Aviation Affairs the aircraft has been banned from flying over the Kingdom's airspace.

"The suspension of this aircraft is a precautionary measure following the tragic crash of the Ethiopian Airlines " an official source said.

Bahrain's Gulf Air, according to their website, doesn't operate any 737 MAX 8 aircraft. Its roster is dominated with Airbus aircraft, with Boeing 787 9 being the only exception.

Oman News Agency (ONA) reported. The company has called on its passengers to follow up updates via its website or contact the Oman Air's Communication Centre.

Egypt bars all 737s

Egypt said yesterday it

would bar all Boeing 737 MAX aircraft from its airspace.

The aviation ministry said it was banning the model from "taking off and landing" at Egyptian airports or "passing through" its airspace.

"The civil aviation authority took this necessary precaution to ensure the safety of passengers," it said in a statement.

The widening action against the aircraft has also put pressure on Boeing to prove the 737 MAX is safe, and the company has said it is rolling out flight software updates by April that could address issues with a faulty sensor.

The 737 MAX has four variants -- MAX 7, 8, 9 and 10 -- distinguished by the number of passengers they can carry. The MAX 8 costs \$ 121.6 million at list price and last year made up a third of Boeing's profits. By the end of January, 4,661 of the planes had been ordered, representing approximately 80 percent of the company's orders.

The manufacturer produces 52 of the planes each month, and planned to increase that monthly pace to 57 this year, key to the goal of delivering 895 to 905 aircraft this year.



A crew works with an investigative team to clear the site after the Sunday crash of the Ethiopian Airlines operated Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, at Hama Quntushele village in the Oromia region

1. Will my flight be affected?

Probably not. The percentage of 737 Max jets in the global airline fleet is tiny at the moment. At the end of February, Boeing had delivered 376 to airlines and leasing companies around the world. The global airline fleet comprised 24,400 planes at the end of 2017, according to Boeing.

2. How do I know I'm about to step aboard a 737 Max?

Check your ticket; you should be able to tell from the booking details. If you are making a booking online, many sites indicate the plane model. If not, websites such as flightstats.com allow you to dig into details of flights at least a few days in advance, including the make and type. For those who want to change flights, most of the airlines permit you to do so but at a cost.

3. How long this go on?

This will depend on what the investigators in Ethiopia find and what corrective action, if any, is ordered. The investigation into the Oct. 29 Lion Air crash pointed to a malfunction of a software feature that repeatedly forced the plane into a nosedive. Investigators have already retrieved the Ethiopian Airlines flight data recorder and the cockpit voice recorder, and the world will be watching closely to see if they reveal any similar problem.

Pilots reported problems with Boeing

Washington, United States

American pilots have reported issues with the plane late last year, it has emerged.

At least four pilots made reports following the October crash of a Lion Air flight in Indonesia shortly after takeoff, all complaining that the aircraft suddenly pitched downward, according to documents reviewed on a flight safety database.

The incidents seem to involve

the flight stabilization system designed to prevent the aircraft from stalling, the "MCAS," which was implicated in the fatal accident in the Lion Air crash that killed 189 people shortly after takeoff.

'DONT SINK DONT SINK'

One pilot logged an incident in November 2018, just weeks after the Lion Air crash, saying the plane "pitched nose down" two to three seconds after engaging the autopilot following takeoff, according to the report on the Aviation Safety Reporting System, maintained by NASA.

"The captain immediately disconnected the autopilot and pitched into a climb," the report said. "The rest of the flight was uneventful."

The report said the flight crew reviewed the incident "at length... but can't think of any reason the aircraft would pitch nose-down so aggressively."

Another pilot on a flight in November said

the crew discussed the concerns about the aircraft and "I mentioned I would engage the autopilot sooner than usual."

But again once engaged, there was a quick automated warning of "DONT SINK DONT SINK!"

"I immediately disconnected the AP (autopilot) ... and resumed climb," the officer said. But after review, "frankly neither of us could find an inappropriate setup error."

"With the concerns with the MAX 8 nose-down stuff, we both thought it appropriate to bring it to your attention."

The Lion Air accident had focused attention on Angle of Attack (AOA) sensors connected to the Aircraft Stabilization System (MCAS).

A malfunction of these tools may erroneously correct the path by pitching the aircraft down due to a mistaken assessment that the aircraft is in stall.

The Ethiopian Airlines disaster took place shortly after takeoff and the aircraft experienced irregular climbs and descents just after taking off.

Skies closed to 737 Max

AFRICA

- Namibia
- Nigeria

ASIA-PACIFIC

- Australia
- China
- India
- Indonesia
- Kazakhstan
- Malaysia
- New Zealand

MIDDLE EAST

- Egypt
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Oman
- United Arab Emirates

NORTH AMERICA

- Canada
- United States

EUROPE

- All EU countries