

# Consumer Perceptions About Cabin Depressurization During Hijackings

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## Consumer Perceptions About Cabin Depressurization During Hijackings

Rian Mehta, Stephen Rice and Scott Winter

Previous research has focused on a variety of consumer perceptions regarding many different scenarios in aviation. However, no study that we know of has examined how consumers might feel about pilots depressurizing the cabin during a hijacking scenario. The current policy is simply to ensure that the cockpit door is locked and the hijackers have no access to the flight controls; however, it has been debated that depressurizing the cabin might eliminate the hijacking threat as all the cabin crew and passengers will be rendered unconscious. The current study presented 449 participants from the United States with two different scenarios: a) the traditional scenario of preventing hijackers from accessing the flight controls, and b) an alternative scenario whereby the pilot depressurizes the cabin. Gender differences were also examined. The results indicated that consumers, in general, felt much more negatively about the scenario in which the pilot could depressurize the cabin compared to the traditional scenario. They were also less willing to fly in these situations. Analysis of gender differences revealed that females were both more negative about the cabin depressurization scenario, and much less willing to fly in that situation. Mediation analyses showed that the relationship between the pilots' actions and willingness to fly was fully mediated by affect; that is, participants were basing their willingness to fly ratings on emotional factors rather than cognitive factors.