

Investigators say they confirmed pilots' account of a rudder-control failure on a Boeing Max jet

March 7 2024, by David Koenig



In this April 10, 2019, file photo, a Boeing 737 Max 8 airplane lands following a test flight at Boeing Field in Seattle. Federal investigators have confirmed in a report Thursday, March 7, 2023, an account by pilots who say the rudder controls on their Boeing Max jetliner failed during a landing last month. Credit: AP Photo/Ted S. Warren, File

Federal investigators said Thursday they confirmed pilots' account of a brief failure of rudder controls on a Boeing 737 Max after it landed at Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey last month.

United Airlines pilots said pedals that control rudder movement on the plane were stuck as they tried to keep the plane in the center of the runway during the Feb. 6 landing.

The pilots were able to use a small nose-gear steering wheel to veer from the runway to a high-speed turnoff. The rudder pedals began working again as the pilots taxied to the gate with 155 passengers and six [crew members](#) on the flight from Nassau, Bahamas, according to a [preliminary report](#) by the National Transportation Safety Board.

The NTSB said preliminary information from the plane's flight data recorder, one of the so-called black boxes, confirmed the captain's description of the event. United was able to recreate the same problem on the 2-year-old plane during a [test flight](#) at the Newark airport three days later, and reported the problem to the NTSB.

Mechanics couldn't find an obvious cause for the malfunction during an inspection, but they replaced parts of the rudder control system, and the plane operated normally during a second test flight, the NTSB said. The plane has made dozens of passenger-carrying flights since then, according to data from FlightAware.

The NTSB said that when it subjected one of the removed parts to cold for one hour in a laboratory, it failed to produce the torque needed for the rudder pedals to work. The NTSB said it plans further testing of the part.

Pedals in the cockpit control the rudder, which is attached to the vertical part of the tail and can be used to point the nose of the plane left or

right.

United, Boeing, parts supplier Collins Aerospace and the Federal Aviation Administration are taking part in the ongoing investigation. Boeing and Collins did not immediately comment.

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