

# Plane Blowout Raises Concerns

## Loose parts in door panels during inspection

AP-Federal investigators say a door panel slid up before flying off an Alaska Airlines jetliner last week, and they are looking at whether four bolts that were supposed to help hold the panel in place might have been missing when the plane took off. The comments Monday from the National Transportation Safety Board came shortly after Alaska and United Airlines reported separately that they found loose parts in the panels — or door plugs — of some other Boeing 737 Max 9 jets.

“Since we began preliminary inspections on Saturday, we have found instances that appear to relate to installation issues in the door plug — for example, bolts that needed additional tightening,” Chicago-based United said. Alaska said that as it began examining its Max 9s, “Initial reports from our tech-



This photo released by the National Transportation Safety Board shows the door plug from Alaska Airlines Flight 1282 on Monday, Jan. 8, 2024, in Portland, Ore. A panel used to plug an area reserved for an exit door on the Boeing 737 Max 9 jetliner blew out Jan. 5, shortly after the flight took off from Portland, forcing the plane to return to Portland International Airport. (National Transportation Safety Board via AP) © Provided by The Associated Press

nicians indicate some loose hardware was visible on some aircraft.” The door plugs are inserted where emergency exit

doors would be located on Max 9s with more than about 200 seats. Alaska and United have fewer seats in their Max 9s, so

they replace heavy doors with the plugs.

The panels can be opened for maintenance work. The bolts

prevent the mechanism from moving upward on rollers when the plane is in flight. The findings of investigators and the airlines are ratcheting up pressure on Boeing to address concerns that have grown since the terrifying fuselage blowout Friday night. A plug covering a spot left for an emergency door tore off the plane as it flew 16,000 feet (4,800 meters) above Oregon.

Boeing has called an online meeting for all employees Tuesday to discuss safety.

The company, which has had problems with various planes over the years, pledged to “help address any and all findings” that airlines make during their inspections of Max 9 jets. Boeing has delivered more than 200 to customers around the world, but 171 of them were grounded by the Federal Aviation Administration on Saturday until the door plugs can be inspected and, if necessary, fixed. During Alaska Airlines flight 1282 on Friday night, roller guides at the top of one of the plugs broke — for reasons the investigators don’t fully understand yet — allowing the entire panel to swing upward

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**“Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability but comes through continuous struggle.”**

*— Martin Luther King Jr.*

*For more information, contact*

**Tiffani Penson**

*we are better together*

tiffani.penson@portlandoregon.gov

503.823.8866

[www.portlandoregon.gov](http://www.portlandoregon.gov)

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