3 ALLEGIANT FLIGHTS FROM ORLANDO DIVERTED

News / Airlines, Airports / Routes

Three Allegiant flights that departed from Orlando Sanford International Airport in the past week had to be diverted midflight.

On Christmas Eve, 141 passengers on a flight to Youngstown, Ohio, were diverted to Jacksonville International Airport for an "engine problem," said a spokeswoman for the Jacksonville Aviation Authority.

On Monday, a plane flying from Orlando Sanford to Appleton, Wis., had to make an emergency landing in Fargo, N.D., after there were de-icing problems on the plane. There were 107 passengers and six crew members on that flight, said Allegiant.

And on Wednesday, a flight traveling from Orlando Sanford to Bangor, Maine, was diverted to T.F. Green Airport in Providence, R.I. after reports of an abnormal smell. There was no indication of a fire or smoke in the cabin; the plane is being inspected to determine the cause of the incident, officials said. There were 151 passengers and six crew members on board.

The incidents come as Allegiant pilots have been asking for bigger scrutiny of the budget airline, citing concerns about the safety of the airline's fleet of planes and the maintenance schedule for

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planes.

"That speaks volumes about the maintenance program," said Chris Moore, chairman of The Aviation Mechanics Coalition, Inc.

Moore said he was approached by Allegiant pilots in 2013 and asked to investigate air returns and diversions for the airline because of maintenance-related issues. On Nov. 13, 2014, Moore submitted a report to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Airline Division, which represents more than 80,000 airline employees, including mechanics, pilots, stock agents and flight attendants.

The report detailed 27 incidents that he said showed Allegiant pilots had to divert or return to the airport they left. Moore said all information was gathered from pilots who contacted him with information about the troubled flights.

Incidents took place between Sept. 4 and Nov. 3 of last year.

In July, the Wall Street Journal reported the Federal Aviation Administration was increasing its oversight of Allegiant after a flight ran low on fuel and was forced to make an emergency landing at the same Fargo airport as Monday's flight.

Allegiant officials said the company, like most commercial airlines, is "in nearly daily contact" with FAA leaders.

The FAA, said Allegiant in a statement, oversees and approves training materials, programs and certifications for police and other key airline staff.

"And any abnormal event is thoroughly reviewed, often in conjunction with the FAA," reads the statement.

In the recent incidents, Allegiant officials said an indicator light came on during the flight to Ohio.

"Out of abundance of caution, an emergency was declared and the aircraft landed safely at [Jacksonville International]," said Allegiant in an email.

Passengers left Jacksonville for Youngstown at 8:50 p.m. after another plane was brought, she said. Allegiant compensated passengers with a $150 voucher for future travel with the Las Vegas-based airline.

Allegiant officials said the flight to Wisconsin was rescheduled from Fargo and passengers departed Tuesday at 11:24 a.m. They received a $100 voucher.

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