

Amazon Air crash in Miami kills 5 contract workers: The cost of profit

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On September 6, 21 Air Flight 7598, operating for Amazon Air, overran Runway 30 while landing at Miami International Airport in Florida. The aircraft struck navigational equipment and then a Ford Econoline van carrying seven aircraft-cleaning contractors inside the airport. It passed through the airport fence, struck a Toyota Corolla Cross on Northwest 67th Avenue and continued through a grassy area before striking another fence near a fleet of Tesla robotaxis. The 32-year-old Boeing 767-300 freighter caught fire before coming to a halt roughly 1,300 feet beyond the paved runway.

Five people were killed and five others were injured. The pilot and co-pilot were admitted to the hospital and have since been released. Two people remained in critical condition Tuesday, while another was in stable condition.

All five of those killed were workers for Professional Ocean Service Corporation, which provides aircraft-cleaning services. They were Rolando Aleman Leon, 55; Yoel Rodriguez Naranjo, 53; Julio C. Pineda, 75; Carlos Acosta Fajardo, 53; and Javierkys Reyes Quevedo, 47. They were subcontracted, low-wage workers at the bottom of the aviation labor hierarchy, killed while performing some of the most precarious work on the airfield.

21 Air is a small North Carolina-based cargo carrier operating the flight on Amazon's behalf under the Amazon Air brand. Amazon uses contracted airlines to supply pilots, maintenance and flight operations, separating the corporation legally from much of the workforce that moves its cargo.

Amazon has owned some aircraft since purchasing 11 used Boeing 767s in 2021, but it continues to employ outside carriers to operate them. The pilots are legally employees of contractors such as Atlas Air, Air Transport International and 21 Air, rather than Amazon. At the time of the previous fatal Amazon Air crash in 2019, senior pilots at Amazon contractors were earning approximately one-third less than UPS and FedEx pilots with comparable experience flying the same aircraft.

On February 23, 2019, Atlas Air Flight 3591, operating for Amazon Air, crashed into Trinity Bay near Houston, Texas, killing all three people aboard. Just weeks before the crash, pilots at Atlas Air and Air Transport Services Group warned that an accident was “inevitable” because of low pay, inadequate training, chronic fatigue and difficulty retaining experienced pilots.

Safety authorities like the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) classify the Miami accident as a runway excursion. A runway excursion occurs when an aircraft overruns the end of a runway or veers laterally from its paved surface.

A study published by flight analytics firm Scaled Analytics noted that out of 104,000 tracked landings, 8,095 “Long Landing” events

were flagged. Only 47 landings resulted in critically low stopping margins, defined as less than 500 feet of runway remaining at 50 knots of ground speed. Crucially, out of those 47 highest-risk landings 39 did not trigger a Long Landing alert. This indicates that traditional tracking programs fail to truly capture the danger posed by runway excursions.

Runway excursions are among the most frequent forms of aviation accident. According to the Flight Safety Foundation, runway excursions accounted for 23 percent of the 283 accidents recorded in the International Air Transport Association database between 2005 and mid-2019. The foundation recorded 20 runway-excursion accidents in 2024, including two fatal crashes, while excursions averaged more than 15 annually between 2019 and 2023.

- A Citation II jet that veered sharply to port (left) at the end of its rollout during a post-maintenance avionics test flight on March 4 at Opa-locka, Florida.

- IAI 1124A Westwind that veered left during the takeoff roll at 146 knots in Las Vegas, Nevada in August, collapsing parts of its landing gear.

- On September 1, a Citation 560 XL that overran the end of the runway in Porterville, California by 1,000 feet at 111 knots. The aircraft sustained substantial damage but zero fatalities.

- A Flexjet Embraer Praetor 500 veered off the side of the Miami-Opa-Locka Executive Airport runway at 101 knots during landing with zero fatalities on September 4.

These incidents are so routine, and so concentrated in the corporate/charter and cargo sector where cost pressure is sharpest, that they barely register as news *until bodies are in the way*.

The fatal Amazon cargo crash in Miami has renewed national focus on a system called the Engineered Materials Arresting System (EMAS), which is a lightweight, crushable concrete block system installed at runway ends to prevent this kind of runway overrun accident. The concept is similar to runaway truck ramps installed on mountain highways or the water-filled impact attenuators (crash cushions) found on many highway medians.

As of August 2025, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reported that EMAS had been installed at 122 runway ends at 70 airports. The FAA now reports that the technology has safely stopped 26 overrunning aircraft carrying 497 people.

The system demonstrated its effectiveness on September 24, 2025, when a CommuteAir flight operating as United Express landed long during heavy rain at Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport in Virginia. The Embraer ERJ-145, carrying 50 passengers and three crew members, was safely stopped by the airport's EMAS bed. No one was injured.

Unfortunately, Miami International Airport relies only on the old standard 1,000-foot grass safety buffer which might have been adequate 70 years ago when commercial aircraft were smaller and slower but is woefully deficient for modern passenger and cargo jets.

Why, then, is EMAS not installed as a matter of course at every airport with commercial operations? The reason is cost. It is cheaper for the airline and airport operators to accept a certain number of dead workers compared to the cost of install arresting systems. Safety improvements are adopted only when the cost of liability exceeds the cost of the fix: a calculation made by owners, not the people who die.

Runway excursions of the overrun type are rarely caused by a single mechanical failure. Instead, they are almost always the result of a causal chain of five factors. Read as a neutral technical checklist, these five factors obscure the social relation behind them. Each is a point at which the profit motive overrides the safety of workers, and of the subcontracted cleaners and motorists on the ground.

The first is an unstable approach, which occurs when an aircraft is approaching the runway “steep and fast” or the pilot fails to achieve a stable speed, glidepath, or configuration before crossing the runway threshold. Typically the problem arises when the pilot attempts to force a landing anyway. The standard response is to discontinue the approach and execute a go-around.

Second, long touchdowns are when the aircraft is traveling too fast. In gusty conditions, the landing glideslope can be difficult to maintain and the pilot will cross the threshold too fast from diving to regain the glideslope line. This can lead to a deep/long touchdown where the plane floats above the runway in an extended flare, using about three times more runway than typically necessary.

Third, runway contamination with standing water, slush, snow, ice, or even oil will drastically reduce the friction between the aircraft’s tires and the runway, causing a much longer landing roll potentially leading to a runway excursion.

Fourth are tailwind penalties. A tailwind increases an aircraft’s groundspeed and the distance required to land. At a major tower-controlled airport such as Miami International, runway selection ordinarily takes the prevailing wind into account. Air traffic controllers clear an aircraft to land, however, rather than compel the pilots to complete the landing. The flight crew retains the authority to reject the assigned runway, request another approach or execute a go-around if the conditions are unsafe.

Whether Flight 7598 encountered a consequential tailwind has not been established. The official weather observation closest to the crash reported wind from 190 degrees at 17 knots, gusting to 26. Runway 30 has a true heading of approximately 299 degrees. Those figures indicate that the aircraft faced primarily a strong crosswind, with a calculated tailwind component of roughly 5 to 9 knots, rather than a direct tailwind of 17 to 26 knots.

The Associated Press quoted Mary Schiavo, a pilot and former inspector general of the Transportation Department, who said the video showed the aircraft floating for an extended period above the runway. “A tailwind would certainly add to your troubles if you’ve already given up a good chunk of the runway,” she said.

Finally, the delayed or improper use of stopping devices by the pilot can cause an excessively long landing distance. Upon touchdown, pilots must immediately deploy three primary braking systems: wheel brakes, ground spoilers and thrust reversers. Ground spoilers reduce wing lift and transfer the aircraft’s weight to the landing gear, allowing the wheel brakes to work effectively. Delayed deployment, mechanical problems or incorrect braking inputs can substantially

increase the stopping distance.

Each of these decisions — forcing a bad landing rather than going around, accepting a long touchdown, delaying braking — is often made under pressure from the employer: concern for burning extra company fuel, and fear of personal penalties for what the company would treat as a waste of money, even when the safest action is the costly one.

This crash is not an anomaly but the normal operation of an industry run for profit. The Boeing 737 MAX disasters killed 346 people through a corporation that, with FAA complicity, subordinated safety to market share.

The November 2025 UPS crash in Louisville ultimately killed 15 people, including three crew members and 12 people on the ground. Workers at the company’s Worldport hub reported that proper maintenance was not being done on the planes.

The March 2026 collision between an Air Canada Express jet and a fire truck at LaGuardia Airport killed both pilots. Only two controllers were on duty, with controllers assigned multiple responsibilities. The investigation also found that the airport’s ground-surveillance system issued no warning and that the fire truck lacked a transponder that would have allowed controllers to track its position.

The NTSB investigation will almost certainly attribute the crash to “pilot error” and absolve Amazon, 21 Air, and the airport operators. This is what state regulatory agencies do: they are instruments for managing the liability of capital, not neutral arbiters of safety. The NTSB will not ask why Amazon structures its cargo operation through subcontractors; why subcontracted cleaning workers, the lowest-paid, least-protected people on the airfield, were placed directly in the path of the hazards of the airfield. Those questions are inadmissible in a capitalist investigation.

Pilots, mechanics, ground crews, and the subcontracted cleaners who died share a common interest in airline safety that is directly opposed to the profit interests of Amazon and its contractors. The unions have collaborated in imposing the very conditions that produce these crashes.

The answer is the formation of independent rank-and-file committees of aviation workers, organized across company and union lines, fighting for safety as a class question and for the expropriation of the airlines from the capitalists who operate them for profit. Safety in the air is incompatible with the private ownership of the airline industry.



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