

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report  
199802488**

**Boeing Co  
B737**

**09 June 1998**

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**NOTE: All air safety occurrences reported to the ATSB are categorised and recorded. For a detailed explanation on Category definitions please refer to the ATSB website at [www.atsb.gov.au](http://www.atsb.gov.au).**

**Occurrence Number:** 199802488                      **Occurrence Type:** Incident  
**Location:** Coolangatta, Aerodrome  
**State:** QLD    **Inv Category:** 4  
**Date:** Tuesday 09 June 1998  
**Time:** 1930 hours                                      **Time Zone** EST  
**Highest Injury Level:** Minor

**Aircraft** Boeing Co  
**Manufacturer:**  
**Aircraft Model:** 737-377  
**Aircraft Registration:** VH-CZK

**Serial** 23663  
**Number:**

**Type of Operation:** Air Transport Domestic High Capacity Passenger  
Scheduled  
**Damage to Aircraft:** Nil  
**Departure Point:** Sydney NSW  
**Departure Time:**  
**Destination:** Coolangatta Qld

**Approved for Release:** Friday, August 7, 1998

During the flight from Sydney to Coolangatta the aircraft encountered unexpected turbulence. The Purser, who was on the flight deck at the time, returned to the cabin, fastened her seat belt, and made an announcement for passengers to secure their seat belts. The pilot reported that the turbulence was unforecast and occurred in clear conditions, lasting for about two minutes.

A child, who was in a rear toilet at the time, was injured. The child described being unable to brace herself against the force of the turbulence and being thrown about the toilet, hitting her head on a tap. She suffered soft tissue injuries, bruising around the lower left rib area and concussion. The seat belt sign was not on when the child entered the toilet, but had been turned on at the onset of the turbulence.

Two cabin crew, who were in the rear galley at the time, reported that the turbulence was so sudden and severe, that they were unable to take their seats. They braced themselves against the galley and a rear exit door. At that time the child opened the toilet door, and one of the flight attendants, believing it was safer for the child to remain in the toilet, told her to go back in and hold on to the rail. The flight attendant managed to get to his seat and fasten his seat belt. When the turbulence subsided he took the child to her mother.

Despite developments in technology and procedures designed to detect and avoid clear air turbulence, aircraft continue to encounter hazardous conditions resulting in injuries. Following a number of recent severe injuries and a passenger fatality due to the effects of in-flight turbulence, the international airline industry is increasing its efforts to educate passengers as to the seriousness of the problem. Methods to protect passengers and crew when turbulence events occur are also being examined.

SAFETY ACTION



As an outcome from a recent turbulence incident in which passengers and crew were injured during a flight from Japan to Sydney, the operator now requires passengers to have their seat belts fastened while seated.

