European Union Aviation Safety Agency

FAQ n.99876

FAQs:

Passengers general, Passengers

Question:

What is the difference between ‘rapid disembarkation’ and ‘evacuation’?

Answer:

Passengers may encounter crew members’ sudden instruction to leave the aircraft as soon as possible. Not every such instruction means that ‘evacuation’ is taking place. In some situations, passengers are instructed to rapidly disembark, not to ‘evacuate’. So, what is the difference between a ‘rapid disembarkation’ and an ‘evacuation’? The below provides some explanation:

Rapid disembarkation :

Rapid disembarkation (also referred to as ‘rapid deplaning’, ‘precautionary deplaning’, ‘precautionary disembarkation’) is a precautionary egress from the aircraft in situations assessed by the crew members as deviating from normal conditions but not being an immediate emergency, i.e. not posing an immediate threat to passengers and crew members on board, but which may escalate into an emergency. Rapid disembarkation usually happens at the airport.

Aircraft doors which were used for boarding are also used for a rapid disembarkation, i.e. with stairs or airbridge(s).

Emergency exits and slides are not used in a rapid disembarkation unless the crew members decide that this has become necessary and will give the relevant command to passengers.

Rapid disembarkation is a rapid egress from the aircraft, therefore passengers and crew members will leave all their belongings on board unless they are instructed otherwise.

Crew members’ instruction (i.e. words used) for a rapid disembarkation will be different from that to evacuate. It is essential that passengers listen to what the crew members are saying, remain calm and leave the aircraft as instructed and as soon as possible.

Evacuation:

Evacuation is a fast egress from the aircraft in situations declared by the crew members as an emergency, i.e. posing an immediate threat to passengers and crew members on board. Evacuation happens on land terrain or in water.

All usable aircraft exits and slides/rafts are used in an evacuation. Passengers and crew members must leave all their belongings on board and immediately proceed to the nearest usable exit. It is vital that passengers listen to crew members' commands, remain calm (panicking will not help), ensure they have their life jacket if in water, and leave the aircraft as commanded by the crew members and as fast as possible.

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