

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 21, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave. SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

In the span of just a few weeks, United Airlines has been plagued by six major safety issues that lend credence to a culture of mismanagement and lack of emphasis on aviation safety and proper maintenance procedures. While we strive to make aviation travel the safest mode of transportation in the world, we recognize that no matter how diligent a company pursues safety, unfortunate incidents may occur. However, these incidents occurred with a variety of different aircraft supplied by different companies in an extremely short time span. The reoccurring variable appears to be United Airlines. We are encouraged to learn that the Federal Aviation Administration is investigating these incidents, and we implore you report your findings to our offices and the public at large.

One significant issue that has garnered attention is the maintenance and mechanical reliability of United Airlines' fleet. Like all airlines, United operates a complex network of aircraft, each requiring meticulous upkeep to ensure a safe operation. However, reports of mechanical failures¹ and maintenance lapses have raised serious questions about the airline's commitment to safety. From engine malfunctions to faulty landing gear, these incidents have not only caused disruptions but also raised concerns among passengers regarding the reliability of United's aircraft and their maintenance standards. Less than two weeks ago, it was widely reported that a tire fell off a United plane forcing it divert from its route and land in LAX.² By sheer luck, the tire fell and landed in the airport's employee parking lot crushing several cars but thankfully no accidents or injuries to any people.

United has a major hub in Houston where many of our constituents work and traverse regularly. They and much of the flying public are often forced to fly United because of its massive dominance in the industry. Our constituents are rightfully demanding answers after two United Airlines aircraft experienced issues that departed from the George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston last week.

¹ [What's causing all the airplane issues this week? \(axios.com\)](https://www.axios.com/2024/03/19/what-causing-all-the-airplane-issues-this-week/)

² [Tire falls off United Airlines Boeing 777 plane departing San Francisco International Airport to Osaka, crushing cars - ABC7 San Francisco \(abc7news.com\)](https://www.abc7news.com/news/12578472/tire-falls-off-united-airlines-boeing-777-plane-departing-san-francisco-international-airport-to-osaka-crushing-cars-abc7-san-francisco/)

The first incident involved a Boeing 737-900 that suffered an engine stall not long after departure and the second incident occurred when a Boeing 737 MAX 8 slid off the runway with the left wing of the aircraft touching the ground, while "landing" in Houston Friday morning.³ Again, on Friday, a post flight inspection revealed a missing panel on a United Boeing 737-800.⁴ As you can imagine, these repeated incidents from a single airline leave many Americans with legitimate questions about their commitment to safety.


After several weeks of silence, CEO of United Airlines, Scott Kirby, finally addressed the issue stating "Unfortunately, in the past few weeks, our airline has experienced a number of incidents that are reminders of the importance of safety" and saying they are pursuing an extra day of training for pilots.⁵

As the regulatory agency tasked with ensuring aviation safety in the United States, we are requesting that your agency submit a full accounting of these incidents and describe any efforts the Federal Aviation Administration is currently undertaking or plans to initiate against United Airlines. The United States and the Federal Aviation Administration was once regarded as the "gold standard" for aviation safety. As the agency charged with the flying public's safety, we implore you to take this matter seriously, reveal the results of your investigation, and apply appropriate accountability mechanisms.

Sincerely,



Troy E. Nehls
Member of Congress



Dan Crenshaw
Member of Congress

³ [UA2477 deplaned: Passengers safely evacuated from United flight at George Bush Intercontinental Airport, IAH spokesperson says - ABC13 Houston](#)

⁴ [Older Boeing plane found to have missing panel after flight from California to southern Oregon | AP News](#)

⁵ [United Airlines flight discovered to be missing external panel after landing safely in Oregon | CNN](#)