EASYJET FLIGHT MAKES EMERGENCY LANDING AFTER PILOT PASSES OUT

News / Airlines



An easyJet aircraft flying from Gatwick airport was forced to make an emergency landing after the pilot fell unconscious mid-flight.

Flight 5461, which was carrying 164 passengers, was diverted at around midday UK time after taking off at 7:25 a.m. for the Greek island of Crete.

The co-pilot then took over the controls and landed the plane safety at Marco Polo airport in Venice, Italy, The Sun reported.

Paramedics took the pilot to hospital after the plane landed.

The pilot remains in hospital, but is not in a life-threatening condition.

Passengers onboard the flight completed their journey to Heraklion airport in Crete after easyJet sent out a replacement aircraft.

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A spokesman for the low-cost carrier confirmed to MailOnline that the flight was diverted "as a result of the Captain requiring medical assistance."

The incident follows two similar events in the U.S. this week.

On Monday, pilot Michael Johnston, 57, fell ill mid-flight, and later died. His family later revealed that he had suffered a heart attack.

The flight heading from Phoenix, Arizona to Boston, Massachusetts was diverted to Sycaruse, New York, when the Mr Johnston was stricken.

A day later, the co-pilot of a plane heading to San Francisco, California, from Houston Texas fell ill.

That flight safely diverted to Albuquerque, New Mexico.

To ensure the safety of the passengers and crew, airline pilots are required to pass annual physical examinations, rising to every six months for captains 40 or older.

Only seven pilots for U.S. airlines and one charter pilot have died during flights since 1994, according to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Steve Wallace, who led the FAA accident-investigations office from 2000 to 2008, said following Mr Johnston's death that it was rare for a pilot to become incapacitated.

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