

PRACTICAL TRAVELER

## Lessons From Flight 1549



Passengers after a US Airways plane crashed into the Hudson River.

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LAST Thursday evening, as Kevin Leibel settled into his seat on an [American Airlines](#) regional plane about to take off from St. Louis to Raleigh, N.C., he did something he had rarely done in the past: He actually paid close attention to the safety procedures being recited by the flight attendant.

Since the US Airways crash and rescue, have you found yourself asking, what would I do? It was less than four hours after [US Airways](#) Flight 1549 had splashed down in the Hudson River, with all passengers and flight crew eventually rescued, and which Mr. Leibel had watched with some amazement on the large-screen televisions in the Admirals Club at Lambert-St. Louis International Airport. “The conversation in the room centered on how we all wanted to know if the passengers sitting in the emergency exit really knew what they were doing,” Mr. Leibel, a frequent flier from Chapel Hill, N.C., recalled.

So when his flight to Raleigh boarded for its 6:30 p.m. Central time takeoff, Mr. Leibel took his seat, 11C, in an emergency exit row and scanned his surroundings closely. “I did look at my row mates — one solo seat across the aisle and another seat next to mine — and briefly considered how they might perform,” he said.

“It was the first time I can remember when everyone paid attention to the safety announcement,” said Matt Davidson, an executive at a plastic injection molding company from Lake Forest, Ill., who flew from Chicago to Denver on Saturday. “Also, I and others around me checked for the red life-vest tab under the seat. The United attendant announced that infant life vests were available. I’ve never heard that before.”

[Kidsflysafe.com](#), which sells a child safety harness for use on planes as an alternative to a car seat, reported a spike in visits to the site. “Apparently a lot of folks took a look at the crash and perhaps have travel coming up with their child and thought, ‘I need that,’” Lisa Orman, a spokeswoman for the site, wrote in an email message.

Since the US Airways crash and rescue, have you found yourself asking, what would I do? Flight crews are trained to guide passengers in an emergency with calm but direct commands: Unfasten seat belts! Come this way! Don’t take anything with you!

In the case of Flight 1549, it appears the pilot expertly handled the emergency river landing, and flight attendants did their best to keep passengers calm while quickly evacuating the aircraft.