

‘It’s a Miracle,’ FBI Agent Says About a Teen’s Survival in the Wheel Well of a Jetliner

A teenage boy who ran away from home survived a five-hour flight in the freezing wheel well of a jetliner that reached 38,000 feet as it traveled from California to Hawaii, the FBI said.

The 16-year-old, from Santa Clara, Calif., quickly lost consciousness as temperatures in the compartment sank as low as minus 80 degrees Fahrenheit (62 degrees Celsius below zero), said FBI special agent Tom Simon.

About an hour after the plane landed on Sunday morning, the boy regained consciousness and emerged onto the tarmac at the airport in Maui, where he was spotted by ground crew.

“It’s just an apparent miracle. ... There was no appearance of any special gear of any sort,” said Simon.

The stowaway told FBI officials that he had run away from home, climbed a fence at the airport in San Jose, Calif., crossed the tarmac and crawled into the wheel well of Hawaiian Airlines Flight 45.

“His story checked out,” and no federal charges were filed, said Simon, of the FBI’s Honolulu office.

The boy was turned over to local child protection officials, and a medical examination showed he appeared to have been unharmed by the ordeal.

The flying time from San Jose to Hawaii was more than five hours.

“Our primary concern now is for the well-being of the boy, who is exceptionally lucky to have survived,” Hawaiian Airlines said in a statement.

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