

SERIOUS INCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Airbus A321-211, EC-HUI
No & Type of Engines:	2 CFMI CFM56-5B3/P turbofan engines
Year of Manufacture:	1999 (Serial no: 1027)
Date & Time (UTC):	3 January 2013 at 1639 hrs
Location:	London Heathrow Airport
Type of Flight:	Commercial Air Transport (Passenger)
Persons on Board:	Crew - 6 Passengers - Not reported
Injuries:	Crew - None Passengers - Not reported
Nature of Damage:	Damage to nose landing gear assembly
Commander's Licence:	Airline Transport Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age:	58 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	15,961 hours (of which 5,131 were on type) Last 90 days - 103 hours Last 28 days - 45 hours
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The aircraft, which was destined for Madrid, was being pushed back from Stand 522 at Heathrow Airport when the incident occurred. The commander reported that the pushback procedure proceeded normally initially and the flight crew were cleared by the ground crew for engine start.

The aircraft's nosewheel steering mechanism, which is hydraulically powered, is normally inhibited during the pushback procedure to allow the pushback vehicle to manoeuvre the aircraft without damaging the steering system. This is achieved by action on a towing control lever on the nose landing gear, which is operated by the

pushback ground crew. When the control lever is in the towing position, a NW STRG DISC message appears on the flight crew's display.

The commander reported that the towing control lever was not correctly set and that, as the right hand engine was started, the nosewheel steering system became pressurised and was damaged as a result. The ground crew stopped the pushback procedure immediately. After explaining the situation to the flight crew, the aircraft was towed back on to stand; it was subsequently inspected and removed from service pending maintenance action.