

Airbus A320-211, F-GHQK, 7 March 2000 at 1740 hrs

AAIB Bulletin No:	8/2000	Ref:	EW/G2000/03/05	Category:	1.1
Aircraft Type and Registration:	Airbus A320-211, F-GHQK				
No & Type of Engines:	2 CFM 56-5-A1 turbofan engines				
Year of Manufacture:	1991				
Date & Time (UTC):	7 March 2000 at 1740 hrs				
Location:	London Heathrow Airport				
Type of Flight:	Public Transport				
Persons on Board:	Crew - 8 - Passengers - 64				
Injuries:	Crew - None - Passengers - None				
Nature of Damage:	Six-inch gouge in the rear freight hold door				
Commander's Licence:	Airline Transport Pilot's Licence				
Commander's Age:	Not relevant				
Commander's Flying Experience:	Not relevant				
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the operator plus an aircraft damage report from the handling agent and a statement from the vehicle driver				

The aircraft arrived from Paris and parked on Stand G14. When the engines had been shutdown and whilst the passengers were disembarking, a ramp agent drove a mobile conveyor-belt vehicle (colloquially known as a 'belt loader') towards the rear hold. Initially the driver stopped the vehicle three to four feet from the aircraft and selected neutral gear whilst he raised the belt to the operating height. He then drove slowly forwards towards the aircraft but found that the belt height was too low. With the vehicle still in gear, he was raising the belt further when his foot slipped off the brake pedal. The vehicle moved forwards causing the belt loader's handrail to strike the hold door forcefully.

The handling agent's ramp services co-ordinator investigated the incident and concluded that it was caused by operator error. The driver should have selected neutral gear and applied the vehicle handbrake before adjusting the belt elevation. The driver was retrained on the correct method of operating the belt loader and his upgrade training was deferred for at least three months.