Airbus A320, SX-BVB

AAIB Bulletin No: 3/2004	Ref: EW/G2003/09/17	Category: 1.1
Aircraft Type and Registration:	Airbus A320, SX-BVB	
No & Type of Engines:	2 IAE 2527-A5 turbofan engines	
Year of Manufacture:	2003	
Date & Time (UTC):	16 September 2003 at 2132 hrs	
Location:	Stand 150, London Heathrow Airport	
Type of Flight:	Public Transport (Passenger)	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 6	Passengers - 110
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Minor abrasion of the paint on the underside of an engine cowling	
Commander's Licence:	Air Transport Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	40 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	6,500 hours (of which 2,850 were on type)	
	Last 90 days - 250 hours	
	Last 28 days - 73 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

History of the flight

A Boeing 757 aircraft had been parked on Stand 150 at London Heathrow during a routine turn around. The ground handling staff arrived in a Ford Escort vehicle, which they parked on the right side of the aircraft, adjacent to the nose landing gear. They prepared the Boeing 757 for push back which ramp control had requested would be a "long push". The company Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) permitted the vehicle to be parked on the stand but all vehicles and obstructions had to be removed before the aircraft's anti-collision light was switched on prior to push back.

A dispatcher was tasked to receive an inbound flight, which was due to park on Stand 240 but at the last minute was changed to Stand 150. On arrival at Stand 150 the dispatcher noted that the Boeing 757 was still parked with the jetty removed and was being prepared for push back. He drove onto the stand and briefed his ramp team leader regarding the aircraft they were due to meet. Having checked that the belt steps, tug and other service vehicles which were parked around the aircraft were being driven away, he moved to the head of the stand and switched on the Azimuth Guidance for Nose-in Stands (AGNIS). The dispatcher moved his car from the stand and parked it in the approved parking area as the Boeing 757 was being pushed back. He was informed on his radio by control that the arriving aircraft had landed and started to make his way to the jetty which was parked in an unusually high position. As he did so the A320 could be seen approaching the stand which caused him some concern as he thought by the way the jetty was parked it might be unserviceable. Having 'special needs' passengers on the flight, the dispatcher ran up the stairs and commenced testing the jetty controls to confirm it was in proper working order as the A320 turned onto the stand. The aircraft edged slowly forward with both pilots monitoring the AGNIS and unaware of the Ford Escort vehicle that was still parked on the stand. Seeing the right engine of the A320 moving towards the

parked vehicle, two aircraft load handlers attempted to signal to the flight deck crew but as the aircraft came to a stop, the forward underside of the right engine cowling came into contact with the vehicle's bonnet. From his elevated position on the jetty, the body of the aircraft prevented the dispatcher seeing the vehicle.

Analysis

The incident occurred because the vehicle had not been removed from the stand in accordance with the company SOP. Also the dispatcher thought the parking stand was being cleared but did not wait until the Boeing 757 had been pushed back in order to confirm that there were no obstructions on the stand before the AGNIS was activated. The last minute changes and his concern for the serviceability of the jetty led the dispatcher to divert his attention from completing the clearance of the stand to confirming the serviceability of the jetty.

The flight crew, following the AGNIS did not see the attempts by the load handlers to signal them to stop. An emergency 'STOP' light is part of the AGNIS but could only be operated from a switch adjacent to the AGNIS control panel located at the head of the parking stand. The load handlers were not aware of the 'STOP' control button. As from 1 April 2004, Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) have required all airlines and handling practitioners to establish an 'Aircraft Turnaround Procedure' in accordance with Health and Safety Executive Document (HSG209). With regard to this incident, the procedures clearly define the duties and responsibilities of nominated individuals to ensure that the stand is clear of obstructions and that all staff are aware of the location and use of the emergency 'STOP' button.

The switching 'on' of the AGNIS is a signal to the aircrew that the stand is available and clear of obstacles. Consequently, it is essential that the stand is checked and clear before the AGNIS is switched 'on'.