

AAIB Bulletin No: 10/95

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INCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration: Airbus A320-212, G-HAGT

No & Type of Engines: 2 CFM56-5A3 turbofan engines

Year of Manufacture: 1992

Date & Time (UTC): 25 July 1995 at 1345 hrs

Location: Hold Echo for Runway 08R, London Gatwick Airport

Type of Flight: Chartered passenger

Persons on Board: Crew - 7 Passengers - 174

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - None

Nature of Damage: None

Commander's Licence: Airline Transport Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 48 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 12,365 hours (of which 1,820 were on type)
Last 90 days - 190 hours
Last 28 days - 63 hours

Information Source: AAIB enquiries

The aircraft was engaged on a scheduled flight from London Gatwick to Tel-Aviv. It was cleared to taxi to hold Echo south and then to line up on Runway 08R. At 1347 hrs it was cleared to take off and departed without apparent incident. However, later in the flight the crew were asked to turn back to Gatwick after airport staff had reported the recovery of a panel from the vicinity of hold Echo. The aircraft returned to Gatwick, arriving on the stand at 1731 hrs. The panel was part of an A320 right overwing slide assembly, however upon inspection of the aircraft the corresponding panel was found correctly in place.

At about the time of the incident, as the subject aircraft was departing Gatwick, there was a discussion on the tower frequency between two other aircraft and the tower concerning the panel which had been seen blowing in the jet efflux of one of the two aircraft. It was thought that the panel had fallen from the aircraft immediately behind the subject aircraft. The panel was recovered and an inspection of the following aircraft was made from the ground. As this showed nothing of significance, that aircraft was then cleared to take off. During this time there was no direct reference to the subject aircraft. It was about an hour after this that the panel was identified as having been fitted to the subject aircraft, which was then recalled.

The subject aircraft had received an A check, in addition to some associated work items, the night before the incident. One of these items was the deployment and replacement of the right hand overwing escape slide. Two nightshift engineers were assigned the task, and one of the two had prior experience of the task. The work appeared to have been carried out in accordance with the Maintenance Manual and the work cards were correctly actioned. The final certification for the completed work was carried out on the same cards by the LAE (licensed aircraft engineer) in charge of the aircraft.

The original slide had been deployed satisfactorily, and had then been removed and returned to stores. The slide blow-out door had been removed and placed on top of the right wing, some five feet away from the fuselage. This action was taken to facilitate access to, and operation of, the slide deflation mechanism.

Maintenance Manual Task 25-62-42-000-002 states: "The stowage compartment attach -panel completes the wing-to-fuselage fairing assembly..... and also contains the blow-out door". In the view of the maintenance organisation, this could lead a reader with limited experience of replacing a slide to assume that the blow-out door formed part of the aircraft panel installation, especially as once the slide is deployed, the blow-out door is only attached to the rest of the slide assembly by press-button fasteners. The deployed slide was repacked without the blow-out door for return to stores.

The LAE who certified the task did not climb on to the wing to inspect the slide as the slide location could be clearly viewed from the ground. The walk-round and pre-departure checks subsequently carried out required no overwing inspection. In addition, the pre-flight checks carried out by the crew do not include an overwing inspection.

The maintenance organisation intends to introduce an additional check item for extraneous matter and accidental damage to be carried out before an aircraft leaves the hangar, and is discussing revision of the Maintenance Manual with the manufacturer.