



crew was advised by ATC after landing that the aircraft may have struck some steps prior to departure at Manchester.

The passenger steps had been placed at the front left door of the aircraft shortly after the aircraft had left the hangar and been positioned on Stand 67; this was done by a ramp services organisation in response to a request by the aircraft handling agents. Sometime later, the handling agents noticed from their monitor that the aircraft anti-collision lights were flashing and alerted their allocated see-off crew to attend G-EPFR. However, the aircraft was then seen to move and the agents assumed that someone else had seen the aircraft off. They then requested that the ramp services organisation remove the steps from the stand. The individual nominated to remove the steps arrived on stand, noticed that the aircraft had gone and coupled his vehicle to the steps. He also saw some chocks on the apron and also removed them. On arrival back at his parking bay, he noticed that the steps appeared to be damaged and immediately informed his supervisor. ATC were then informed and the message was relayed to the aircraft crew and the aircraft parent company.

At the time of the incident, the aircraft company had a Flight Crew Notice (FCN) detailing starting procedures on 'Remote Stands' ie the aircraft had moved to free a stand but was still awaiting an ATC clearance. This stated that a 'Start Crew' was not required in these circumstances. However, if the aircraft had been towed to the remote stand, verification was required from the tow crew that no chocks were in place. Following the incident on 2 March, a further FCN was issued to emphasise the requirement for 'full ground crew backup' for all departures except for those from remote stands. This FCN emphasised that the commander still had to ensure that all ground equipment was clear before brake release.

At the time of the incident, it was dark with heavy rain and the stand was unlit. The commander had assumed, from their conversation, that the engineer would remove the ground equipment and started up without ensuring that a see-off crew were in position. With ATC clearance, the commander taxied off stand; the steps were still in position at the front left door. Additionally, the chocks were also found close to the aircraft parking position; no one was identified who had removed them prior to the arrival of the individual to collect the steps. The commander was certain that he had not taxied directly over the chocks and this view was supported by evidence that no more than idle power was used to taxi.

The incident followed a misunderstanding between the commander and the engineer. However, there was then no attempt by the commander to contact the handling agents to confirm if there was a see-off crew available. Additionally, the commander had the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that all ground equipment was clear prior to taxiing.