Airbus A320-111, F-GLGG

AAIB Bulletin No: 12/20011 **Ref: EW/G2001/08/06** **Category: 1.1**

INCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Airbus A320-111, F-GLGG	
No & Type of Engines:	2 CFM56-5A1 turbofan engines	
Date & Time (UTC):	4 August 2001 at 1700 hrs	
Location:	London Heathrow Airport	
Type of Flight:	Public Transport (Passenger)	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 6	Passengers - 157
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	Small dent and scoring of the nose-cone	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot	

The aircraft was being pushed back from Stand F11 at London Heathrow Airport. The pushback tug was of an old design with a relatively high roof to the driver's cabin and a sliding cabin door orientated across the longitudinal axis of the tug. The tug was being driven with the driver's cabin door in the open position, which effectively increased the width of the tug cabin.

During the pushback an acute angle developed between the tug and the aircraft's longitudinal axis to the extent that the top corner of the open tug door lay vertically beneath the aircraft nose. As the aircraft traversed a concrete joint in the apron the nose dipped and the top corner of the tug's cabin door contacted the aircraft nose causing a small dent and 10 cm of scoring to the nose-cone skin.

The tow bar in use for this pushback was about half a metre shorter than other tow bars in the handling agent's inventory. The agent had carried out a risk assessment of the pushback process for the combination of tug, tow bar and aircraft and had established that clearance between an open tug door and the aircraft would exist throughout all stages of the pushback; however, the possibility of the clearance being compromised by a bump in the apron surface had not been considered.

The tug in use during this incident is being replaced by a more modern version with a lower cabin roof. In the meantime the handling agent has taken steps to ensure that the combination of tug and towbar is not repeated for the A320 and other susceptible aircraft types.