

AAIB Bulletin No: 8/93

Ref: EW/C93/6/2

Category: 1a

Aircraft Type and Registration: Boeing 737-436, G-DOCO

No & Type of Engines: 2 CFM 56-3-C1 turbofan engines

Year of Manufacture: 1992

Date & Time (UTC): 6 June 1993 at 0835 hrs

Location: London Heathrow Airport

Type of Flight: Public Transport

Persons on Board: Crew - 8 Passengers - 70

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - None

Nature of Damage: Dent in left side of forward fuselage

Commander's Licence: Airline Transport Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 46 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 11,000 hours (of which 4,400 hours were on type)
Last 90 days - 94 hours
Last 28 days - 28 hours

Information Source: AAIB Field Investigation

The aircraft was parked on stand C16 at Terminal 1, London Heathrow Airport, in preparation for a scheduled public transport flight to Brussels. The Air Bridge at this stand was unserviceable and the passengers and crew had boarded the aircraft using mobile stairs which had then been removed to a safe distance. As the aircraft was awaiting engine start and push back clearance personnel from the airport authority arrived to carry out repairs to the air bridge. Shortly afterwards the air bridge extended outwards and collided with the left side of the aircraft, producing a dent about 1 metre long aft of the forward left door. The crew and passengers disembarked using the mobile stairs and the aircraft was withdrawn from service for repair.

Statements from the maintenance technicians indicated that the air bridge had been unserviceable by virtue of the fact that the 'bridge head tunnel' would not extend. It had been left about 8 feet from G-DOCO. Unbeknown to them, the reason for the failure to extend was that the gearbox controlling this motion had come out of mesh and, since the brake on the tunnel motion relies on engagement it was free to slide in and out. As part of their diagnostic procedure the two

technicians had begun lowering the bridge and it was at this point that the tunnel had rolled out under gravity as it passed through the horizontal.

Heathrow Airports Limited advise that they have inspected all similar equipment for problems similar to those found on stand C16 and are working on changes to the gearbox drive couplings with a view to ensuring a repeat of this incident does not occur.