

No: 4/89

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Category: 1a

Aircraft Type and Registration: McDonnell Douglas MD-83, G-BNSA

No & Type of Engines: 2 Pratt & Whitney JT8D-219 Turbo-fan engines

Year of Manufacture: 1987

Date and Time (UTC): 12 February 1989

Location: Gatwick Airport

Type of Flight: Non-scheduled public transport

Persons on Board: Crew - 8 Passengers - 157

Injuries: Crew - None Passengers - None

Nature of Damage: Aircraft's Radome damaged after collision with push back tug

Commander's Licence: Airline Transport Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 45 years

Commander's Total Flying Experience: 7100 hours (of which 580 hours were on type)

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the aircraft commander

The aircraft was being prepared for departure on a public transport charter flight from Gatwick Airport to Geneva. The flight deck crew consisted of a captain undergoing line training, who operated from the left hand seat, and a company line training captain who operated from the right hand seat. The aircraft's Auxillary Power Unit (APU) was inoperative and the flight crew had decided to start the No.2 engine at the stand, using a Low Pressure (LP) air start truck, followed by a cross bleed start of No.1 engine during push back. The cross bleed start involves selecting an increase in power from the live engine in order to obtain sufficient duct pressure through the cross bleed system to start the other engine.

The aircraft commander reports that during the push back No.2 engine power was increased in order to carry out the cross bleed start. Shortly after this the crew heard the tug operator to request 'Brake Set'. However, as there appeared to be no urgency they ignored the request and continued with the cross bleed start. Almost immediately the tug operator gave a second, urgent call for brakes to be applied and the commander looked up to see the tug rotating clockwise around the end of the towing bar. Immediately he applied full foot brake pressure and brought the aircraft to a stop, however the tug continued to slide until its left side windscreen pillar collided with the right side of the aircraft's

radome. The engine start was discontinued and, after the tug was re-aligned, the aircraft was towed back to the stand where the passengers were disembarked through the normal channels.

The weather conditions at the time were fine, however the parking area surface was wet. Since this accident the operating company has issued a Flying Staff Instruction that prohibits cross bleed starts during push back.