

Fokker F27 Mark 500, G-JEAD, 28 January 1999 at 0054 hrs

AAIB Bulletin No: 4/99 Ref: EW/G99/01/18 Category: 1.1

Aircraft Type and Registration: Fokker F27 Mark 500, G-JEAD
No & Type of Engines: 2 Rolls Royce Dart 532-7 turboprop engines
Year of Manufacture: 1981
Date & Time (UTC): 28 January 1999 at 0054 hrs
Location: Liverpool Airport
Type of Flight: Public Transport
Persons on Board: Crew - 2 - Passengers - None
Injuries: Crew - None - Passengers - N/A
Nature of Damage: None
Commander's Licence: Airline Transport Pilot's Licence
Commander's Age: 40 years
Commander's Flying Experience: 5,045 hours (of which 1,077 were on type)
Last 90 days - 109 hours
Last 28 days - 33 hours
Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The crew had reported for duty at Exeter at 1830 hrs on 27 January and had flown two sectors before landing at Liverpool from where they were scheduled to carry freight to Edinburgh. There was considerable work in progress at Liverpool associated with the upgrading of the manoeuvring area and the weather was poor with a visibility of 6,000 metres in rain and an 800 foot cloudbase. Shortly after midnight, the crew obtained taxi clearance to Runway 27 with instructions to follow a 'Follow Me' vehicle. The pilot attempted to follow the vehicle, but considered that it was travelling too fast for the conditions and the distance between the vehicle and the aircraft increased to about 50 metres. Approaching the runway, the vehicle stopped momentarily before moving off to the East. The pilot continued to taxi ensuring that he followed the wheel tracks of the vehicle precisely but after a short distance, the left main landing gear bogged down in some very soft ground. The pilot informed ATC and shut the aircraft down before vacating. The 'Follow Me' vehicle did not return to the aircraft to offer assistance.

At the point where the aircraft had left the paved surface, there were no lights or edge markings to indicate the limit of the manoeuvring area and the area of soft ground had been covered with a thin

layer of asphalt to prevent debris from contaminating the taxi way. Photographic evidence indicated that the 'Follow Me' vehicle had crossed the area of asphalt which had supported its weight.

The Commander considered that the cause of the incident was his inability to distinguish the taxiway surface from the asphalted area in the prevailing light conditions and the fact that the 'Follow Me' vehicle had taken an inappropriate route.