

UK FLIGHT SAFETY COMMITTEE



CARGO SAFETY BULLETIN

NUMBER 1

LOCKS UP FORM SIGNED IN ADVANCE

EVENT 1

The agent, who was not present throughout the loading sequence, passed the signed “Locks Up” form to the Captain. When the Captain questioned his absence, he replied “We’re very busy today”. The agent had signed the form “because he trusted the loaders”.

PROCEDURE

The signatory had no means of knowing that the locks had been checked.

COMMENT

The agent who signs the “Locks Up” certificate must personally check that they are in fact up. This is a critically important last line of defence against shifting cargoes.

Don't Assume, Check!

EVENT 2

The agent passed the “Locks Up” certificate to the Captain when the loading was supposedly complete. The flight crew noticed that one ULD was missing; it was located and then loaded and the aircraft departed safely.

ERROR

The aircraft had not been loaded in accordance with the load plan.

COMMENT

The flight crews identified the two failures above and action was taken to avoid the potential danger. However, look at this:

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EVENT 3

During take off the pilot needed to apply more force than usual in order to rotate the aircraft to become airborne. Investigation after landing revealed that the ULDs were not in the positions shown on the load plan and load sheet and thus the trim, the “balance” of the aircraft, was incorrect.

And so, how did this happen?

PROCEDURES & ERRORS

Load Control issued a total of three load plans, an original plus two revisions. The supervisor directed the loading of the lower holds according to plan three but the main deck was loaded according to the original plan. When the main deck loading was completed, the man directing it reported “Complete” to the supervisor, who then signed the load sheet and locks up certificate without checking or visiting the main deck. The supervisor had assumed that the main deck had been loaded in accordance with the final load plan.

Don't Assume, Check!

“Small” errors like this have caused aircraft to be uncontrollable and crews to lose their lives. Everyone involved in loading has a vitally important role to play and there is no room for the word “assume”.

For loading supervisors on the ramp there are three vital things that must be achieved:

- For the particular type of aircraft, the loading sequence must be followed to avoid tipping or stressing the airframe on the ground,
- It must be loaded accurately according to the load plan so that the aircraft is in trim, i.e. “balanced”, for flight,
- The cargo must be correctly secured, nets and tie downs fastened, all locks up, to avoid load shifts in flight.

Don't Assume, Check!