

UK FLIGHT SAFETY COMMITTEE



CARGO SAFETY BULLETIN

NUMBER 4

LOADING AWARENESS

Time was pressing and the load plan was in a remote office. The ramp co-ordinator overseeing the loading telephoned the office to obtain the details to enable the loading team to proceed.

ERROR 1

The ULD numbers for two containers (ABC06757) and ABC06767) were similar and their positions on the aircraft were reversed.

Passing numbers by telephone or radio is fraught with hazard and remember, European languages sometimes reverse the order of the numbers e.g. in English we say “twenty one” but the Germans say “einundzwanzig” (one and twenty). Is the number 21, 120, or 12?

Don't Assume, Check!

The ramp co-ordinator was driving the transporter and gave instructions from the ground only.

PROCEDURE

He did not board the aircraft. From the ground it is not possible to check the container distribution.

Don't Assume, Check!

PROCEDURE

When the computer load plan was given to the co-ordinator the print size, font and quality made it difficult to read and correctly identify the container numbers.

Don't Assume, Check!

The load plan required the containers to be loaded from the rear most position and then sequentially forward leaving three empty spaces at the cargo door.

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ERROR 2

Before loading began, the locks for the two rear positions were up (from the previous sector). Consequently, the container intended for the rear of the cargo deck was two positions further forward than intended. In addition, because the load plan showed three empty positions at the door, when loading was complete, the ramp supervisor saw that there was a space by the door and assumed that there were three empty spaces.

Don't Assume, Check!

Every take off with a large aircraft involves the determination of speeds and tailplane (horizontal stabiliser) angles. The crew needs an accurate load sheet (and weather information, temperatures and wind etc.).

AND SO, WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

The take off calculation made by the crew was correct relative to the load sheet but, of course, the load sheet did not reflect the actual loading. As the aircraft approached its rotation speed, when the pilot attempted to raise the nose to become airborne, the aircraft remained firmly on the ground. With only a few yards to spare, the pilot adjusted the tailplane and very close to the end of the runway the aircraft took off. It was a very close call.

After a successful landing further calculations were made that showed with the actual load distribution the aircraft was on its forward centre of gravity limit for take off and beyond it for landing. Therefore, this shows that not only was the take off hazardous because of the incorrect tailplane angle but the landing was also hazardous!

AND WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED?

- Do not pass critical numbers by radio or telephone
- Ramp supervisors must supervise and not just view from a distance
- Poorly printed load plans and load sheets are not acceptable
- Before loading begins, all locks should be down. If the rear position is not planned for use, then at the beginning of the operation the appropriate locks should be raised

AND FINALLY

Don't Assume, Check!

