



National Transportation Safety Board Aviation Accident Final Report

Location:	Atlanta, GA	Accident Number:	ATL03LA124
Date & Time:	08/01/2003, 1510 EDT	Registration:	N970AT
Aircraft:	Boeing 717-200	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	118 None
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 121: Air Carrier - Scheduled		

Analysis

According to the captain, after receiving permission from the ramp tower to commence the power-back, he indicated to the marshaller he was cleared for the power-back. During the power-back while lining up parallel with the north-south taxi line the captain felt a loud thump on the left side of the airplane. During the power-back turn a baggage tug was observed moving behind the airplane. The marshaller observed the tug driver getting jet blasted and one of the carts lying on the ground. The left wing walker, observed the tug driver come to a complete stop in the neutral area. The wing walker motioned the tug driver cross behind the airplane before the marshaller began the power-back. The tug driver pointed at his tug as if something had gone wrong, and the airplane collided with the baggage cart. The tug driver, observed the wing walker clear the tug to pass behind the airplane. As the tug driver proceeded slowly behind the airplane, the tug driver saw the trailing edge of the airplane coming towards him. In an attempt to speed up to avoid the airplane, the wingtip of the airplane struck the forth cart knocking it off of the transporter. Examination of the left wing revealed, the trailing edge of the aileron and wingtip were buckled. Review of the Airtran Standard Practice Flight Crew Powerback procedures, General Guidelines 6719.3, Part (D) states: It is the responsibility of the ground crew to ensure that the ramp area is clear of foreign objects and conflicting traffic before and during powerback.

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: The failure of the ground crew to follow powerback procedures and directives.

Findings

Occurrence #1: ON GROUND/WATER COLLISION WITH OBJECT
Phase of Operation: TAXI - PUSHBACK/TOW

Findings

1. OBJECT - VEHICLE
2. (F) PROCEDURES/DIRECTIVES - NOT FOLLOWED - GROUND PERSONNEL

Factual Information

On August 1, 2003, at 1510 eastern daylight time, a Boeing 717-200, N970AT, operating as flight 460, registered to Wells Fargo Bank Northwest NA Trustee and operated by Airtran Airways Incorporated, collided with a baggage cart during powerback at Hartsfield International Airport, Atlanta, Georgia. The domestic passenger flight was operated under the provisions of Title 14 CFR Part 121 with an instrument flight plan filed. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. The airplane sustained substantial damage. The airline transport rated captain, airline transport rated first officer, three flight attendants, and 116 passengers were uninjured. The flight was originating from Hartsfield International Airport, Atlanta, Georgia at the time of the accident.

According to the captain, after receiving permission from the ramp tower to commence the power-back, he flashed the taxi lights to the marshaller indicating he was cleared for the power-back. During the power-back while lining up parallel with the north-south taxi line the captain felt a loud thump on the left side of the airplane. The marshaller then gave the signal to stop the airplane.

According to the marshaller, he gave the captain the signal to begin the power-back. During the power-back turn a baggage tug was observed moving behind the airplane. After the turn was complete, the marshaller observed the tug driver getting jet blasted and one of the carts lying on the ground. The stop signal was given and the airplane came to a complete stop.

According to the left wing walker, the tug driver had come to a complete stop in the neutral area. The wing walker motioned the tug driver cross before the marshaller began the powerback. The tug driver pointed at his tug as if something had gone wrong, and the airplane collided with the baggage cart.

According to the tug driver, the wing walker cleared the tug to pass behind the airplane. The tug driver proceeded to cross the taxiway behind the airplane. As the tug driver proceeded slowly behind the airplane, the tug driver saw the trailing edge of the airplane coming towards him. He sped up in an attempt to avoid the airplane, and the wingtip of the airplane struck the forth cart knocking it off of the transporter.

Examination of the left wing revealed, the tailing edge of the aileron and wingtip were buckled.

Review of the Airtran Standard Practice Flight Crew Powerback procedures, General Guidelines 6719.3, Part (D) states: It is the responsibility of the ground crew to ensure that the ramp area is clear of foreign objects and conflicting traffic before and during powerback.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline Transport	Age:	55, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane Multi-engine	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 1 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	07/11/2003
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	8000 hours (Total, all aircraft), 3434 hours (Total, this make and model)		

Co-Pilot Information

Certificate:	Airline Transport	Age:	42, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Multi-engine Land	Seat Occupied:	Right
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	Seatbelt, Shoulder harness
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	Yes
Instructor Rating(s):	None	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 1 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	10/22/2002
Occupational Pilot:		Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:			

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Boeing	Registration:	N970AT
Model/Series:	717-200	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	No
Airworthiness Certificate:	Transport	Serial Number:	55031
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	123
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	06/14/2003, Continuous Airworthiness	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	121000 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	422 Hours	Engines:	2 Turbo Jet
Airframe Total Time:	4973 Hours at time of accident	Engine Manufacturer:	Rolls-Royce
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	BR715-A2-30
Registered Owner:	Airtran Airways Inc.	Rated Power:	18500 lbs
Operator:	Airtran Airways Inc.	Operating Certificate(s) Held:	Flag carrier (121)
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	ZZDA

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual Conditions	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	ATL, 1026 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	0 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	1530 EDT	Direction from Accident Site:	0°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Scattered / 3400 ft agl	Visibility	10 Miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	6 knots /	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	280°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30.09 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	28° C / 23° C
Precipitation and Obscuration:			
Departure Point:	ATLANTA, GA (ATL)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Destination:	BALTIMORE, MD (BWI)	Type of Clearance:	Unknown
Departure Time:	1530 EDT	Type of Airspace:	Class B

Airport Information

Airport:	THE WILLIAM B HARTSFIELD ATLAN (ATL)	Runway Surface Type:	Unknown
Airport Elevation:	1026 ft	Runway Surface Condition:	Unknown
Runway Used:	NA	IFR Approach:	Unknown
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Unknown

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	5 None	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	113 None	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	118 None	Latitude, Longitude:	33.640278, -84.426944

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Eric H Alleyne	Report Date:	06/30/2004
Additional Participating Persons:	Glenn Thompson; Atlanta FSDO; College Park, GA		
Publish Date:			
Investigation Docket:	NTSB accident and incident dockets serve as permanent archival information for the NTSB's investigations. Dockets released prior to June 1, 2009 are publicly available from the NTSB's Record Management Division at pubinq@ntsb.gov , or at 800-877-6799. Dockets released after this date are available at http://dms.nts.gov/pubdms/ .		

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The Independent Safety Board Act, as codified at 49 U.S.C. Section 1154(b), precludes the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an incident or accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report. A factual report that may be admissible under 49 U.S.C. § 1154(b) is available [here](#).