

Airways

MAY 2002

A GLOBAL
REVIEW OF
COMMERCIAL
FLIGHT

Southwest Cockpit Odyssey



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Swissair
Flying the Fokker 50
Navigating the DC-8

Runaway Bus

A Northwest Airlines Airbus A320-211 (N305US) was severely damaged in a bizarre incident at Las Vegas-McCarran International Airport on February 6. The aircraft was in the process of being moved from the gate to the parking ramp by a Northwest mechanic and contract maintenance crew. Reportedly, without verification that the brakes were set or wheels chocked, the tow bar was disconnected from the tug. The aircraft began to roll backwards with the tow bar still attached to the nose gear. In a vain attempt to stop the A320, the crew pursued the runaway and threw chocks under the wheels, but these were splintered as the airplane increased speed on the four-degree downward slope. After some 200ft (60m), the A320 jumped a drain culvert at the edge of the ramp and went over a steep, 12ft (3.65m) embankment backward to the lower cargo area. The engines impacted the ground at the top edge of the slope as the main gear dropped off the embankment, the rear fuselage struck the ramp and landed on a string of parked LD3 container dollies, and the main gear then jumped a second drain culvert on the lower ramp. At this point in the wreck, the right wing struck a light pole inboard of the aileron. This impact deflected the aircraft forward, twisting to the left with the right gear dropping back into the drain culvert. The nose gear—with the tow bar still attached—was forced back up the embankment and was twisted about 110 degrees off centerline.

Fortunately, the light pole prevented the aircraft from continuing into four FedEx aircraft parked 20ft (6m) away. Airport maintenance crews had to remove the pole in order for the aircraft to be extracted from the scene and removed to the maintenance area. The A320 sustained damage to the cowlings of both engines, its radome was fractured on the left side by the tow bar, the trailing edge of the wing was penetrated forward to the spar and the flaps were split in several places, the lower rear fuselage was damaged from the center wing to the tail with multiple rips in the skin up to 8ft (2.4m) in length and was severely dented by the collision with the dollies, and the nose gear was wrenched past its turning limit.

An investigation and inspection to determine the necessary repairs is underway.

Patrick Dean



PHOTOS: PATRICK DEAN



New Aviation Stamps



Royal Mail is celebrating five decades of commercial aviation with a set of five stamps issued on May 2, the 50th anniversary of the first commercial jet flight (see page 44).

The stamps feature the Airbus A340-600 (2nd Class inland), due to enter service later this year; Concorde (1st Class inland); the Hawker Siddeley Trident (37p-European basic letter rate); Vickers VC10 (45p-air mail up to 10gm); and the de Havilland Comet (65p-air mail 10-20gm).

In addition to the individual stamps there will also be a miniature sheet featuring all five stamps (price £1.93), a presentation pack (£2.30), and postcards bearing enlarged images of the stamps (25p each). Designed by Roundel, the stamps go on sale from Post Office branches, Royal Mail orderline +44 (0) 08457 641 641, or online at www.royalmail.com/stamps 2002 from May 2.

