

Learning from experience - # 5

Aircraft dispatched with gear pins installed

The aircraft had been on the ground for nearly a week with limited involvement by the maintenance organisation. On the day of its operation, the planned flight had been brought forward from 04.00 to Midnight for departure.

In preparation, at 21.00 maintenance staff reviewed the aircraft Technical Log and commenced a daily check and pre-departure inspection (PDI), this work was partially completed and the task was handed over to another engineer due to work load requirements.

However, the engineer who completed the work and had certified for the tasks in the Tech Log was not aware that the PDI element had not been completed, as no formal hand-over procedure had been used.

The task of departing the aircraft was then given to a third party handling agent; they assumed that the PDI had been completed by engineering. No write up had been made in the Tech Log for installation of the gear pins in the first place, something which was not picked up by the departing flight crew.

The aircraft was then dispatched and following an airbourne return for removal of the gear pins a total delay of 95 minutes was incurred with additional fuel cost penalties.

Lessons learned

- The company have implemented a formal hand-over procedure
- A dedicated gear pin stowage has been fitted as a modification on the flight deck and a procedure introduced to ensure that flight crew check the correct gear pin compliment before flight
- The aircraft movement handling agreement was reviewed to ensure that PDI responsibilities were also more clearly understood, particularly when gear pins are fitted for aircraft towing.