

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 A.M., E.D.S.T., OCTOBER 6, 1975
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ISSUED: October 6, 1975

Forwarded to:

Honorable James E. Dow
Acting Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-75- 79

On September 8, 1975, the left wing trailing edge inboard foreflap separated from an American Airlines Boeing-747 during an approach to the San Juan International Airport, Puerto Rico.

Before its investigation of this accident, the National Transportation Safety Board was aware of six other inboard foreflap separations on the Boeing-747 since 1972. The five most recent separations occurred during a 14-month period beginning July 1974. Although there have been no serious injuries as a result of the separations, two of them have caused major airframe damage. In one case, a 12-foot foreflap section fell to the ground and narrowly missed children.

In the recent San Juan accident, about 12 feet of the foreflap separated from the aircraft and struck the fuselage and horizontal stabilizer. The fuselage sustained extensive impact damage in the area of seat Row 37, and window panel fragments were thrown across the seats of that row. Fortunately, there were no passengers in these seats.

Three of the previous foreflap separations have been attributed to seizures of a foreflap airload roller or rollers. Although our investigation of the latest separation is not completed and the probable cause has not yet been determined, we have found a seized foreflap airload roller on the left inboard flap. Further investigation revealed one seized, and one binding roller on the right inboard flap of this airplane. After the accident, American Airlines inspected its fleet of 747's and found two seized airload rollers on other aircraft.

Honorable James E. Dow

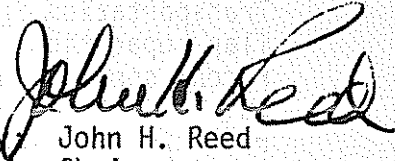
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The Safety Board is aware that Airworthiness Directive (AD) 75-20-05 has been issued to cope with this problem and we believe that the AD will serve to correct the problems which cause the foreflaps to separate. However, the Board is concerned that the initial 100-flight inspection interval is excessive with regard to the inboard foreflaps, since the failures have occurred in that system. Moreover, we believe that the effective date of the inboard foreflap inspection should not be delayed until October 24, 1975; that delay, in conjunction with the 100-flight interval for operator compliance with the directive's initial inspection provisions, may result in undue hazard to the public. We believe that these separations have the inherent potential to inflict serious or fatal injury to passengers aboard the aircraft and to persons on the ground. This potential, combined with the frequency with which the separations have occurred, make it imperative that corrective action be taken as soon as possible.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Amend AD 75-20-05 to require that the inspection of the inboard foreflaps be conducted within the next 25 flights, effective on the date of issuance of the amended AD. (Class I)

REED, Chairman, McADAMS, THAYER, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.


By: John H. Reed
Chairman

THIS RECOMMENDATION WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.