



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Log 2133
2135

Date: March 24, 1989

In reply refer to: A-89-15

Mr. Robert E. Whittington
Acting Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D.C. 20591

The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating two recent incidents of pilot deviation that involve departures of U.S. air carrier airplanes from the wrong runway at the Houston/William P. Hobby (Hobby) Airport, Houston, Texas. Both flights were cleared by the tower air traffic controller to take off on runway 12 right (12R), but the pilots inadvertently took off on runway 17 which intersects runway 12R at the approach end of both runways. The last 2,200 feet of runway 17 has been closed due to construction, making it unusable for turbojet airplanes. Both airplanes struck barricades approximately 3,800 feet down runway 17 and sustained minor damage.

On January 10, 1989, at approximately 1512 Universal Coordinated Time (UTC),¹ Eastern Airlines flight 536, a McDonnell Douglas DC-9, struck barricades on rotation during its takeoff roll, and overflowed workers and equipment on runway 17 at Hobby airport. Flight 536 suffered minor skin damage on the aft section of the airplane due to the impact with the barricades. The flight continued to its destination, Atlanta, Georgia, without further incident. There were no injuries to any of the 67 people on the airplane or to those on the ground.

On March 23, 1989, at approximately 1520 UTC, American Airlines flight 508, a McDonnell Douglas MD-82, struck a barricade on rotation during its takeoff roll on runway 17 at Hobby airport. The flight proceeded to its destination, Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, Texas, without further incident. There were no injuries to anyone on the airplane or to those on the ground. An inspection of runway 17 after the incident disclosed the nose gear door and tailskid of the airplane on the runway.

The Safety Board is concerned that both incidents had the potential for catastrophic accidents and loss of lives. As a result, the Safety Board believes that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) should take immediate corrective action, in conjunction with the airport authority, to prevent inadvertent takeoffs by air carrier airplanes on runway 17 at the Houston Hobby Airport. The Safety Board's investigations into all aspects of the incident is continuing.

¹/ All times are given in Universal Coordinated Time. To convert to central standard time, subtract 6 hours.

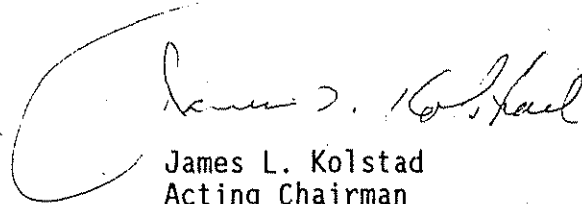
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Take immediate corrective action, in conjunction with the airport authority, to prevent inadvertent takeoffs by air carrier airplanes on runway 17 at the Houston Hobby Airport. (Class I, Urgent Action)(A-89-15)

KOLSTAD, Acting Chairman, BURNETT, LAUBER, NALL, and DICKINSON, Members, concurred in this recommendation.

Member Burnett filed the following comment:

I would have preferred to see an explicit recommendation to have runway 17 closed down until adequate alternate measures can be taken to secure the safety of air carrier passengers.



James L. Kolstad
Acting Chairman