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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: June 17, 1980

Forwarded to:

Honorable Langhorne M. Bond
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D.C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-80-50

On March 10, 1979, a Swift Aire Lines, Inc., Aerospatiale Nord 262, N418SA, ditched in Santa Monica Bay near Marina Del Ray, California, shortly after takeoff from Los Angeles International Airport. The flight was a scheduled commuter operation from Los Angeles, California, to Santa Maria, California. Of the four passengers and two crewmembers aboard the aircraft, two crewmembers and one passenger were killed.

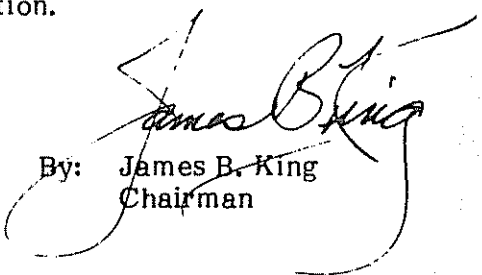
One of the causal factors in the accident was an inadvertent autofeather of the right propeller. During the investigation, the Safety Board learned that another Nord 262 operator had reportedly experienced 50 to 60 inadvertent propeller autofeathers. The Safety Board's investigation of the operator's records confirmed 20 propeller autofeathers, none of which had been reported into your organization's Service Difficulty Reporting Program. The confirmed autofeathers occurred during the time period from September 1, 1978, to May 25, 1979. Apparently, this vital data was not reported to the Service Difficulty Reporting Program because each event occurred either during static engine runups or during the takeoff roll, and, therefore, did not constitute a reportable incident according to 14 CFR 121.703 (b) and 14 CFR 135.415 (b) and did not clearly fall within the ambit of subparagraph (c) of either paragraph which are ambiguous and allow varied interpretations as to their application to the Service Difficulty Reporting Program.

The Safety Board believes that propeller malfunctions, inadvertent autofeather system activations, and engine component structural failures should be reportable items under 14 CFR 121.703 (c) and 14 CFR 135.415 (c) regardless of the phase of ground or flight operation in which they were experienced. These events could clearly endanger the safe operation of an aircraft if they were to occur at a critical phase of takeoff or flight. Therefore, the Safety Board believes that operators should report these specific malfunctions or failures. The assimilation and distribution of the facts and circumstances of such occurrences through the Service Difficulty Reporting Program would enhance the FAA's data base and the consequent ability to identify potential accident causing mechanisms. To accomplish this, the Safety Board believes that the Service Difficulty Board should provide specific illustrations of items operators are to report under 14 CFR 121.703 (c) and 14 CFR 135.415 (c).

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

Issue an Advisory Circular, or by other appropriate means, advise operators of specific illustrations of failures and malfunctions which should be reported to the Service Difficulty Reporting Program under the provisions of 14 CFR 121.703 (c) and 14 CFR 135.415 (c) regardless of the phase of ground operation or flight at which they occur, and, as a minimum among those illustrations, include propeller malfunction, inadvertent autofeather systems activation, and engine component structural failure. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-80-50)

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS, GOLDMAN, and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in this recommendation.


By: James B. King
Chairman