

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: October 6, 1972

Adopted by the NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
at its office in Washington, D. C.
on the 21st day of September 1972

FORWARDED TO:)
Honorable John H. Shaffer)
Administrator)
Federal Aviation Administration)
Washington, D. C. 20591)

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION A-72-170

The National Transportation Safety Board recently investigated an Eastern Air Lines, Inc., McDonnell Douglas DC-9 cabin fire. The fire occurred while the aircraft was parked at a gate at Atlanta International Airport, Atlanta, Georgia, on May 10, 1972. Passengers had not yet boarded.

The origin of the fire was determined to be a short circuit between pins of an unused passenger service unit electrical receptacle. A metal fragment from a failed retaining spring clip was found shorted across pins supplying 28 VDC and 110 VAC and ground. The unused passenger service unit originally served a third seat which was removed when Eastern Air Lines retrofitted the tourist cabin to a three-two abreast seat configuration.

The heat generated by the shorted wires eventually ignited adjacent honeycomb material and propagated into a major fire which gutted the entire cabin. The fire was of such intensity as to burn through the cabin skin in several places.

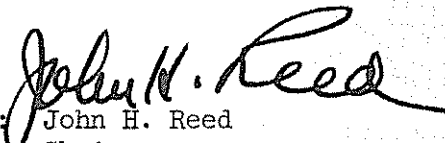
The Safety Board is concerned that other unused electrical receptacle plugs may become shorted and that similar fires may occur. We believe that all unused receptacles should be suitably capped or otherwise electrically deactivated to preclude inadvertent shorts of the type that occurred in this case.

In view of the possibility that other aircraft may be fitted with similar unused receptacles, the Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Issue a Maintenance Bulletin directing inspectors to inform operators of the facts and circumstances involved in this accident so that operators can take appropriate corrective action.

This recommendation will be released to the public on the issue date shown above. No public dissemination of the contents should be made prior to that date.

Reed, Chairman; McAdams, Thayer, Burgess, and Haley, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.


By: John H. Reed
Chairman