



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: Nov 19, 1999

In reply refer to: A-99-97

Honorable William S. Cohen
Secretary
Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1155

On March 4, 1999, at 2200 central standard time, a Douglas DC-9-15F, N195US, operated by USA Jet Airlines, Inc., encountered a flock of large birds while on final approach for landing at Kansas City International Airport, Kansas City, Missouri. During the encounter, several birds were ingested into both engines, resulting in severe engine power loss. The pilot regained enough power in one engine to continue the approach and land the airplane without further incident. There were no injuries. Night visual meteorological conditions prevailed at the time of the encounter, and an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan had been filed for the nonscheduled domestic air cargo flight. The flight was conducted under the provisions of 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 121.

On February 22, 1999, about 1455 eastern standard time, a Boeing 757, N682DA, operated by Delta Air Lines Inc., as flight 338, penetrated a flock of birds during takeoff from Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport, Covington, Kentucky. According to the captain, the takeoff roll was normal until reaching approximately 150 knots, at which time a flock of birds traveling from left to right passed in front of the airplane. The captain alerted the first officer (the pilot flying) to the hazard and asked him to attempt to climb over the flock. The first officer increased the airplane's pitch angle, but just as the main landing gear had lifted off of the runway, the airplane penetrated the flock. The captain advised air traffic control of the event and was cleared to land. The captain observed no change in engine performance or flight characteristics during or after the event. There were no injuries, but the airplane was substantially damaged. Visual meteorological conditions prevailed, and an IFR flight plan had been filed for the scheduled passenger flight destined for Washington, D.C. The flight was conducted under 14 CFR Part 121.

The National Transportation Safety Board has been concerned about bird strike hazards to aircraft for many years. Since 1973, it has issued 16 safety recommendations to the Federal Aviation Administration to prevent accidents from bird strikes. The Kansas City and Covington incidents indicate that despite the considerable government and industry attention that has been focused on this issue over the last 20 years and the safety improvements that have been made in response to Safety Board safety recommendations, bird strike hazards continue to threaten the operation of aircraft and the safety of passengers.

Various Federal agencies involved in aviation and wildlife protection have different missions and, sometimes, conflicting responsibilities and mandates. For example, the goals of improving aviation safety and promoting wildlife conservation through habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement sometimes conflict. The Safety Board concludes that the various agencies need to meet to consider a unified approach to the problem of bird strike hazards and to reconcile their different agendas.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the U.S. Department of Defense:

Participate in a task force, to be convened by the Federal Aviation Administration, to establish a permanent bird strike working group to facilitate conflict resolution and improve communication between aviation safety agencies and wildlife conservation interests. (A-99-97)

Chairman HALL, Vice Chairman FRANCIS, and Members HAMMERSCHMIDT, GOGLIA, and BLACK concurred with this recommendation.

By: Jim Hall
Chairman