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British Airways flight was forced to make emergency landing at Heathrow with engine on fire after tired engineers completed work on the WRONG PLANE

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- Engine of A319 burst into flames on a London to Oslo flight in May 2013
- Investigation revealed that engine covers were left off by technician staff
- Planned to return to add oil but went back to a totally different plane
- Overtime had left staff 'compromised by fatigue' but British Airways confirmed they will remain with the company

By JAMES DUNN and HANNAH PARRY FOR MAILONLINE

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A British Airways flight was forced to make an emergency landing at Heathrow with one engine on fire after exhausted engineers worked on the wrong aircraft.

Passengers were left terrified when the covers of both engines flew off and one of them burst into flames on the flight of an A319 from London to Oslo in May 2013.

The pilot was forced to return to the airport on one damaged engine, making an emergency landing while the plane scattered chunks of metal, some weighing up to 37kg, across the runway.



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On fire: Passengers were left terrified when the covers of both engines blew off and one of them burst into flames on the flight of an A319 from London to Oslo in May 2013



© Baba Sariffodeen/Sky News

Tense moment: The pilot was forced to return to the airport on one damaged engine, making an emergency landing after while the plane scatted chunks of metal, some weighing up to 37kg, across the runway

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It was down to her and Joel Williams



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Nearly spilled out of it





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Passengers had tried to alert crew members about a problem with the engine but they did not understand what they were trying to say

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An **Air Accident Investigation Bureau report** (AAIB) found that blundering engineers had accidentally left the plane's engine covers unlatched during maintenance operations at Heathrow.

Two nightshift engineers had intended to return to top up the oil and latch the fan cowls, but had gone back to an entirely different plane, which was a different model, on a different stand.

The A319 that they had been working on is considerably smaller than the A321 they returned to, with 143 passenger seats, compared to 205.

Investigators found that the workers could have been 'compromised by fatigue'.

One of the BA technicians had worked 70 hours over seven consecutive days and nights and was on the second of two 12-hour overtime nightshifts.

Though they were initially suspended, British Airways have confirmed that the staff will remain with the company.

The blunder was also missed by a pilot and ground handler inspections before take off.

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The investigation revealed that one of the fuel covers cut through a fuel pipe after take off, causing the engine to set on fire and leaking almost three tonnes of fuel.

However, the engine was shut down promptly which reduced the intensity of the fire, but forced the pilot to land on just one engine.

Passengers had tried to alert crew members about a problem with the engine but they did not understand what they were trying to say and a senior crew member couldn't manage to get in touch with the captain.

Just 33 minutes after taking off, flight BA762 was back on the runway and all 75 passengers and five crew members were being evacuated via the emergency chutes.

No-one was injured but investigators revealed that one had put other passengers at risk by throwing his suitcase down the emergency chute.



© PA



Back on the ground: Just 33 minutes after taking off, flight BA762 was back on the runway and evacuating all passengers via the emergency chutes.



© Splash News



Engineers 'failed to lock doors on both engines' which resulted in the emergency landing

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The accident, caused by fan cowls being left unlatched, is not unique and this has led the AAIB to make a number of recommendations to stop it happening again.

The report reads: 'This, and numerous other similar events, shows that Airbus A320-family aircraft have a history of departing with the fan cowl doors unlatched.'

'It is also evident that, in practice, the flight crew walk-around inspection is not entirely effective in detecting unlatched fan cowl doors and therefore a design solution is necessary.'

'Enhanced methods of detection through design solutions are being considered by the aircraft manufacturer.'

'As a result of this investigation, five Safety Recommendations were made concerning: fatigue risk management; fan cowl door position warnings; fan cowl door certification requirements; in-flight damage assessments by cabin crew and aircraft evacuation procedures.'

Cowl doors have blown off 34 times before May 2013 on A320 aircrafts - the family that the A319 is in - and 12 times since the Heathrow incident.

The report recommends that Airbus modify the A320 aircraft family so that pilots are alerted electronically if the covers are left unlatched but this was rejected in favour of high-visibility paint on the latches.

Investigators also called for a 'Fatigue Risk Management' police to be adopted after analysis showed that the technician's shift pattern resulted in a 'two in five chance he experienced high levels of sleepiness'.

They also recommended British Airways reviews its inspection policy after revealing it had been ineffective on this occasion.

A British Airways spokesman said: 'The safety of our customers and crew is always our highest priority. The changes we have already made to our procedures, along with the safety recommendations for EASA and Airbus, will prevent occurrences of this type of incident in the future.'

'It is through co-operation with the AAIB and other safety bodies that we, and the airline industry as a whole, can continue to improve the safety of flying and prevent future incidents.'

'Our highly trained pilots and cabin crew ensured our customers' safety throughout the flight and the subsequent evacuation.'



Different plane: An example of the A319 that the technicians left with the covers unlatched with plans to return later to top up the oil. File picture

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Ahoy there! New mom



+9

This is an example of the A321 that the technicians returned to, which looks longer and slimmer and carries more than 50 passengers more than the A319



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London to Oslo: The accident happened on a flight from Heathrow to Oslo in May 2013

Read more: Aircraft Accident Report 1/2015 - Airbus A319-131, G-EUOE, 24 May 2013 Air Accidents Investigation Branch report - GOV.UK

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