

SAFETY BULLETIN

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CASE STUDIES : TOWING INCIDENTS

What is a towing incident?

An incident of damage to aircraft or near miss of a collision of aircraft with other aircraft or vehicle or a fixed structure occurring during towing.

Spate of towing incidents

Incident 1

One Fokker aircraft was planned to be towed from Hangar 1 to domestic terminal. Since normal tow tugs were found with no fuel, a heavy duty tug was used to tow, without headset communication between tug operator and the brake rider. A loud noise of shear pin braking was heard. The aircraft ANC started rolling faster than tow tug Eio. Brake rider observed that the aircraft lost directional control and was veering left and right while moving forward.

He tried to alert the tug operator of the situation

by waiving his hand outside the open cockpit window and simultaneously started to apply brakes gradually. Tug operator looked in the rear and realized the unusual movement of the aircraft which was fast approaching at an angle to the tug. To avoid contact of aircraft with the tug, he took evasive action of steering the tug and applying brakes. Consequently, the tow bar was bent. (See photograph).

Lessons Learnt

1. No headset - no towing
2. Only authorised personnel will function as aircraft brake rider



Incident 2

There were one aircraft P2-ANQ on its left and a PNG Air aircraft on the right. As such, there was marginal clearance of wing tips and hence the situation called for extra caution. The towing crew comprised of tow tug operator, aircraft brake rider and one wing walker. LHS of wing tip touched RHS wing tip of stationary P2-ANQ.



Lessons Learnt

1. No headset used for communication between tug operator, brake rider and the wing walker.
2. There was no marshaller for coordination but only a wing walker and not two wing walkers. The only wing walker was trying from left to right and back at the rear of the aircraft while the aircraft was being towed forward and also turning.
3. Only authorised personnel will function as brake rider.

Safe Operations

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If you have any queries on the subject.