

## **ATSB report finds Tiger Airways Airbus flew for eight months with a wing fault.**

A TIGER Airways passenger jet flew for eight months with a faulty wing before the problem was reported to investigators, an air safety report reveals.



The report tells how the problem was only reported when the Airbus A320, carrying 125 passengers in May last year, began to shake continuously during a Melbourne bound flight.

Australian Transport Safety Bureau investigators say in the report that the problem should have been reported eight months earlier when it was experienced by another pilot, forcing him to turn back and land.

In both instances the shaking disappeared when the jet was landing.

Investigators found that Tiger Airways, the operator of the aircraft, failed to comply with the Transport Safety Investigation Act by not reporting the earlier incident.

Responding in a statement Tiger Airlines said the symptoms of both incidents were similar, but the problems were unrelated and that ongoing safety is never compromised.

In a second statement tonight Tiger Airways contradicted the regulator saying the plane did not fly continuously for eight months with a faulty wing.

Airline spokeswoman Vanessa Regan said that the first incident in 2008 was not safety related, and that it was considered inappropriate to report the event (to the ATSB).

``At no time was safety compromised or was safety a risk," she said, noting that after the first incident a decision was made to undertake a technical assessment in Melbourne where a technician was available.

``That issue was resolved at that time," Ms Regan said, adding that the second incident was immediately reported to the ATSB.

The investigators report attributed the incident to a servo valve

controlling the movement of the flaps on trailing edge of the left wing.

Investigators said the valve was adjusted incorrectly when the plane was built in 2007 causing undue wear in the flap control mechanism.

The wing flaps, otherwise known as ailerons, are hinged surfaces that move up and down on the wings during flight to increase or reduce the varying degrees of lift on an aircraft.

In its report yesterday, the ATSB offered a detailed picture of the incident, telling how the Tiger aircraft, registered VH-VNC left Mackay aerodrome in Queensland for Melbourne on May 18 last year with 125 passengers and six crew.

During the flight a caution message appeared in the cockpit warning of a flight control problem.

At the time the crew reported that there appeared to be no flight control problems.

But the report tells that once the jet reached cruise height of 35,000ft, a "light continuous shaking became evident within the aircraft."

Ten minutes into the incident it was estimated that the left aileron was moving up and down five degrees, with the flight manager reporting to the pilot that the left wing was "moving up and down."

A subsequent check by the co-pilot confirmed the flight manager's report.

"He identified to the pilot in charge that the left aileron was moving up and down continuously, and that the left wing was moving up and down through about 1 meter," the report says, telling how the pilot decided to divert to the Gold Coast.

According to the report the vibration increased at 20,000 ft as the jet descended.

The regulator noted that Tiger Airways had revised its safety reporting system and included additional training for its flight and cabin crews and Airbus had had found a new way to adjust the hydraulic valve.