

SERIOUS INCIDENT

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Airbus A319-111, G-EZDN	
No & Type of Engines:	2 CFM56-5B5/3 turbofan engines	
Year of Manufacture:	2008 (Serial no: 3608)	
Date & Time (UTC):	4 July 2012 at 1405 hrs	
Location:	Prague Airport, Czech Republic	
Type of Flight:	Commercial Air Transport (Passenger)	
Persons on Board:	Crew - 6	Passengers - 149
Injuries:	Crew - None	Passengers - None
Nature of Damage:	None	
Commander's Licence:	Airline Transport Pilot's Licence	
Commander's Age:	52 years	
Commander's Flying Experience:	13,500 hours (of which 5,000 were on type) Last 90 days - 204 hours Last 28 days - 43 hours	
Information Source:	Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot and company air safety report	

Synopsis

The pilots calculated takeoff performance using the full length of Runway 24 at Prague, when in fact the available runway length was considerably reduced by temporary works. They realised the mistake during takeoff when the aircraft approached works at the temporary runway end.

Description of the event

The two pilots reported for duty at Stansted Airport at 0600 hrs to fly a four-sector duty. In their pre-flight briefing package, the crew noted a NOTAM for Prague Airport to the effect that the available length of Runway 24 was temporarily reduced by works from 3,715 m to 2,500 m.

The aircraft landed at Prague on Runway 30 after the third sector of the duty and the flight crew started preparation for their final flight to Stansted. The runway in use for takeoff was Runway 24; the pilots listened to the ATIS broadcast, but it was reportedly in heavily accented English. They did not glean from it that the runway length was reduced, and had forgotten the content of the associated NOTAM seen at the pre-flight stage. Thus, the airport details copied by the co-pilot to the paper flight plan did not contain any reference to the reduced length, and their subsequent takeoff performance calculations were based upon takeoff using the normal runway length. The commander later attributed the oversight to reduced crew awareness at the end of a lengthy duty period.

The pilots' route manuals contained airport charts for both the normal (full runway length) and the temporary (reduced) distances. As the crew were not aware during planning that the available length was reduced, they referred only to the normal charts. The commander considered that the presence of both normal and temporary charts in the route manual contributed to the incident. He also noted that the crew's pre-flight activities had been interrupted by a visit to the flight deck by an acquaintance, and thought that this distraction may also have been a factor.

The work in progress on Runway 24 was at the departure end, not easily visible to the crew at the start of the takeoff roll. Also, as the aircraft had landed on Runway 30, the crew had not seen the works at that stage either. The commander noted later that there were no warnings from ATC¹ or ground signage indicating that the runway length was reduced.

The takeoff run appeared normal to the pilots until the point they realised the aircraft was rapidly approaching works on the runway. The aircraft rotated and became airborne at the planned speeds but approached much closer to the works than would have been intended. The event posed a considerable distraction for the crew which, combined with a frequency change immediately after takeoff, led to them failing to select the landing gear up or check that it was retracted prior to reaching landing gear limit speed. Flap retraction was normal, and the aircraft continued to its destination.

Footnote

¹ The ATIS content regarding runway length was a valid form of communication for the runway length information and standard procedures require that crews acknowledge to ATC the most recent ATIS received, using its identifying letter.