



Air Accident Investigation Unit Ireland

FACTUAL REPORT

INCIDENT

Boeing 737-8AS, EI-DCN
Near Lisbon, Portugal
9 October 2013



An Roinn Iompair
Turasóireachta agus Spóirt

Department of Transport,
Tourism and Sport

FINAL REPORT

Foreword

This safety investigation is exclusively of a technical nature and the Final Report reflects the determination of the AAIU regarding the circumstances of this occurrence and its probable causes.

In accordance with the provisions of Annex 13¹ to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, Regulation (EU) No 996/2010² of the European Parliament and the Council, and Statutory Instrument No. 460 of 2009³, safety investigations are in no case concerned with apportioning blame or liability. They are independent of, separate from and without prejudice to any judicial or administrative proceedings to apportion blame or liability. The sole objective of this safety investigation and Final Report is the prevention of accidents and incidents.

Accordingly, it is inappropriate that AAIU Reports should be used to assign fault or blame or determine liability, since neither the safety investigation nor the reporting process has been undertaken for that purpose.

Extracts from this Report may be published providing that the source is acknowledged, the material is accurately reproduced and that it is not used in a derogatory or misleading context.

¹ **ICAO Annex 13:** International Civil Aviation Organization, Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, Air Accident and Incident Investigation.

² **Regulation (EU) No 996/2010** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 on the investigation and prevention of accidents and incidents in civil aviation.

³ **Statutory Instrument (SI) No. 460 of 2009:** Air Navigation (Notification and Investigation of Accidents, Serious Incidents and Incidents) Regulations 2009.



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In accordance with Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, Regulation (EU) No 996/2010 and the provisions of SI 460 of 2009, the Chief Inspector of Air Accidents, on 9 October 2013, appointed Mr Leo Murray as the Investigator-in-Charge to carry out an Investigation into this Incident and prepare a Report.

Aircraft Type and Registration:	Boeing 737-8AS, EI-DCN
No. and Type of Engines:	2 CFM 56-7B26
Aircraft Serial Number:	33808
Year of Manufacture:	2004
Date and Time (UTC):	9 October 2013 @ 08.16 hrs
Location:	Lisbon Upper Control Area (UTA)
Type of Operation:	Public Transport - Scheduled
Persons on Board:	Crew - 6 Passengers - 167
Injuries/Incapacitation:	Crew - 1 Passengers - Nil
Nature of Damage:	None
Commander's Licence:	Airline Transport Pilot Licence (Aeroplanes) issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)
Commander's Details:	Male, aged 35 years
Commander's Flying Experience:	6,300 hours, of which 6,100 were on type
Notification Source:	<i>Gabinete de Prevenção e Investigação de Acidentes com Aeronaves (GPIAA)</i> ⁴
Information Source:	Investigation delegated to AAIU

⁴ GPIAA: Portuguese Civil Aviation Safety Investigation Authority.

FINAL REPORT

SYNOPSIS

During the cruise portion of a scheduled passenger flight, the Commander felt unwell. As the flight approached the vicinity of Lisbon, his condition worsened. The Co-pilot suggested an immediate diversion to Faro Airport (LPFR) and the Commander agreed. After checking the weather conditions were suitable, the Co-pilot declared an emergency with Lisbon Air Traffic Control Centre (ATCC) and commenced a diversion. The flight landed without further incident. Once on the ground, the Commander was met and assessed by medical personnel.

NOTIFICATION

The occurrence was notified to the AAIU by the GPIAA as State of Occurrence. As the GPIAA did not intend to investigate the occurrence, the Investigation was delegated to Ireland as State of Registry and State of the Operator.

1. FACTUAL INFORMATION

1.1 History of the Flight

The flight departed from East Midlands Airport (EGNX) on a scheduled passenger service to Tenerife South (GCTS) with the Commander acting as Pilot Flying (PF). As the flight progressed, the Commander noticed that he had a slight headache. This was his first duty following a period of four days off, he stated that he had been dealing with a light cold 6-7 days previously.

The flight was routine until approaching the northern coast of Spain when the Commander suddenly felt unwell. Having alerted the Co-Pilot, the Commander decided to take a meal break, however his condition deteriorated and he briefly lost consciousness. At this time, the Co-pilot assumed command of the flight. He summoned the Senior Cabin Crew Member (SCCM) to brief her on the situation. He also switched on the passenger seat-belt sign to ensure that the cabin could be secured quickly. The Commander regained consciousness and agreed with the Co-pilot's decision that they should divert the flight to LPFR. The SCCM attended to the Commander while the Co-pilot requested the weather for LPFR to assess its suitability as a diversion aerodrome. The condition of the Commander had now improved and he elected to leave the flight deck for a few minutes to freshen up. During this time, the No. 2 Cabin Crew Member (CCM) was called and remained on the flight deck until the Commander returned.

The Co-pilot declared an emergency with Lisbon ATCC and requested a diversion to LPFR. The flight was cleared to route direct to point VENOL⁵ and then to the initial approach fix for Runway (RWY) 10. The Co-pilot then made an address to the passengers and set up the aircraft for the expected approach, including all approach briefings. When he had accomplished this, he increased the speed in the descent until passing Flight Level (FL) 100.

⁵ VENOL: Navigation reporting point situated at N37° 04.4' W008° 15.4'



At this point the Commander called on the interphone and it was agreed that it would be best for him to return to the flight deck for the remainder of the flight. The Commander re-occupied his seat and engaged the reel-lock on his harness. His condition was now much improved. He positioned his seat at the rear of the seat tracks to prevent unintentional interference with the aircraft controls.

The Co-pilot completed the descent, approach and landing without incident. The Commander, having recovered, manoeuvred the aircraft to its parking stand. Once on stand, the Commander received medical attention and positioned back to the UK the same day.

The Co-Pilot, aged 26 years, was the holder of a Commercial Pilot Licence (Aeroplanes) issued by the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA). He had a total of 1,502 hours flight time, of which 1,159 were on type.

2. AAIU Comment

Sudden incapacitation of a flight crew member is a rare, but serious event, which requires an immediate and effective response by the remaining crew member(s).

The Co-pilot was aware during the flight that the Commander felt unwell. When the Commander became increasingly unwell, the Co-pilot assumed the command role and took appropriate and considered actions to ensure the safe conclusion of the flight. At all times the Co-pilot acted with due regard to his priorities utilising the principles of CRM⁶, including summoning the SCCM to assist on the flight deck, confirming the weather at the diversion aerodrome, declaring an emergency, initiating the diversion, keeping the passengers informed and planning and executing a timely descent to a safe landing. Once on the ground, medical assistance was readily available for his colleague.

When an event involving incapacitation of a commander occurs, it places great demands on the remaining flight crew. Initial and recurrent pilot training deals with such an eventuality, which requires clear and focused thinking to plan a course of action, communicate it and execute it without distraction. In this case, the emergency was well handled to a safe conclusion.

- END -

⁶ CRM: Crew Resource Management.

In accordance with Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, Regulation (EU) No 996/2010, and Statutory Instrument No. 460 of 2009, Air Navigation (Notification and Investigation of Accidents, Serious Incidents and Incidents) Regulation, 2009, the sole purpose of this investigation is to prevent aviation accidents and serious incidents. It is not the purpose of any such investigation and the associated investigation report to apportion blame or liability.

A safety recommendation shall in no case create a presumption of blame or liability for an occurrence.

Produced by the Air Accident Investigation Unit

AAIU Reports are available on the Unit website at www.aaiu.ie



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Turasóireachta agus Spóirt**

**Department of Transport,
Tourism and Sport**

Air Accident Investigation Unit,
Department of Transport Tourism and Sport,
2nd Floor, Leeson Lane,
Dublin 2, Ireland.

Telephone: +353 1 604 1293 (24x7): or
+353 1 241 1777

Fax: +353 1 604 1514

Email: info@aaiu.ie

Web: www.aaiu.ie