



Australian Government

Australian Transport Safety Bureau

# Safety Advisory Notice

All international operators using Brisbane Airport

Number: AO-2018-053-SAN-003

## Managing the use of pitot probe covers at Brisbane Airport

Brisbane Airport Corporation and the Civil Aviation Safety Authority have both previously recommended that operators use covers on their aircraft's pitot probes during turnarounds to mitigate the risk of insects building nests in them and significantly affecting the reliability of airspeed indications. In addition to using pitot probe covers, rigorous processes need to be in place to ensure that covers are removed prior to flight.

### What happened

During a take-off roll at Brisbane Airport on 18 July 2018, the flight crew of an Airbus A330 (international operation) detected an airspeed anomaly including red speed (SPD) flags on both primary flight displays. The flight crew continued the take-off and climb and carried out several checklists before returning to Brisbane Airport.

A subsequent inspection after the aircraft landed identified that pitot probe covers were fitted to the aircraft's three pitot probes, which made the probes ineffective for flight.

### Why did it happen

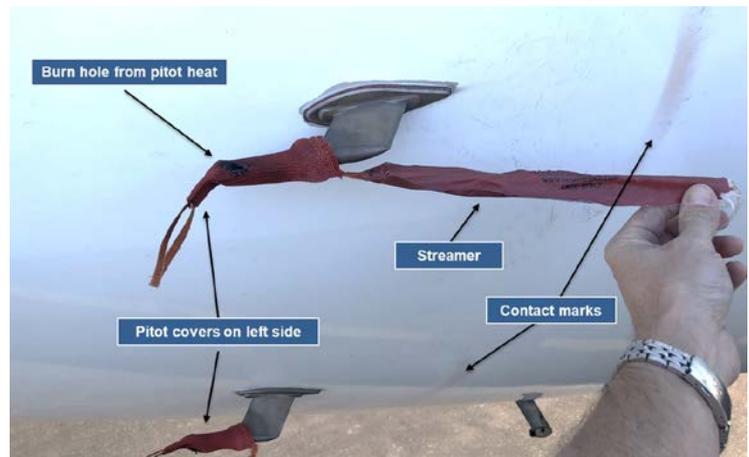
The ATSB investigation is continuing, and the full reasons and context associated with the pitot probe covers not being removed prior to flight, and the take-off being continued with unusable airspeed information, are still being examined.

In recent years there have been several reports of insect activity disrupting aircraft systems at Brisbane Airport. These included blocked pitot probes, mainly from nests built by mud-dauber and other wasps, resulting in airspeed discrepancies and other effects.

The international operator did not routinely use pitot probe covers for turnarounds at Brisbane Airport or other locations. Shortly after the previous flight on 18 July, covers were placed on the aircraft's three pitot probes by a local engineering support person. Due to miscommunication, the operator's certifying engineer was not aware of their fitment, and subsequent inspections during the turnaround by personnel from the operator and the ground handling service provider did not identify that they had been fitted.

### Safety advisory notice

**AO-2018-053-SAN-003:** The Australian Transport Safety Bureau advises all operators that conduct flights to Brisbane Airport to consider the use of pitot probe covers and, if covers are used, ensure there are rigorous processes for confirming that covers are removed before flight.



Reconstruction of pitot probe covers on 9M-MTK, showing pitot cover damage and rub marks on aircraft skin from the streamer (Source: ATSB)

Read more about this ATSB investigation: [AO-2018-053](#)

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