

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report  
199801956**

**Douglas Aircraft Co Inc  
DC9-33F**

**13 May 1998**

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**NOTE: All air safety occurrences reported to the ATSB are categorised and recorded. For a detailed explanation on Category definitions please refer to the ATSB website at [www.atsb.gov.au](http://www.atsb.gov.au).**

**Occurrence Number:** 199801956                      **Occurrence Type:** Incident  
**Location:** Melbourne, Aerodrome  
**State:** VIC                                              **Inv Category:** 4  
**Date:** Wednesday 13 May 1998  
**Time:** 2230 hours                                      **Time Zone** EST  
**Highest Injury Level:** None

**Aircraft Manufacturer:** Douglas Aircraft Co Inc  
**Aircraft Model:** DC9-33F  
**Aircraft Registration:** VH-IPC                                              **Serial Number:** 47193  
**Type of Operation:** Air Transport Cargo Domestic High Capacity Scheduled  
**Damage to Aircraft:** Nil  
**Departure Point:** Melbourne Vic.  
**Departure Time:**  
**Destination:** Launceston Tas.

**Approved for Release:** Saturday, July 11, 1998

The aircraft was being prepared for a freight flight with newspapers included as part of a standard load for this service. Normally the newspaper publisher informed the operator of the weight of the consignment and the newspapers would arrive at the airport in sufficient time to ensure an ontime departure. However on this occasion, the consignment was delayed.

The duty manager decided to delay the flight's departure to await the arrival of the newspapers. The aircraft's upper deck and Compartment 1 of the lower deck had been loaded, and the manager intended to load the newspapers in the rear compartment of the lower deck in which 670 kg of weight allowance was available.

The duty manager had the newspapers weighed and found them to be heavier than normal at a weight of 1,070 kg. He reported that he had informed the captain that the consignment was 400 kg overweight but the captain later stated that he had not been told of the discrepancy. The newspapers were loaded and the aircraft departed 20 minutes later than its scheduled departure time.

The loading crew at the destination opened Compartment 1 and noted the Universal Loading Device (ULD) tag as showing the weight of an item of cargo as 87 kg. The crew did not believe this figure and checked the weight at 277 kg. The loading crew then opened the rear compartment and noted a ULD tag showing a cargo weight of 607 kg. They again checked the weight and found 1,172 kg of newspapers and 78 kg of other freight.

The net effect of these discrepancies was that the aircraft was heavier than its maximum zero fuel weight limit and that the centre of gravity was aft of its computed position, although within limits. The flight crew reported that the flight was normal and free from any noticeable abnormalities in aircraft performance or handling.

Since the occurrence, the operator has replaced the ULD tags with new "user friendly" tags designed to reduce the probability of error.



The reason the crew were unaware of the excess load could not be determined.

