

National Transportation Safety Board

Office of Aviation Safety

Washington, DC 20594



DCA24LA295

OPERATIONAL FACTORS

Pilot Statements

September 17, 2024



Internal Memorandum

Date: 9/11/2024

To: Captain Doug Martin, Director & Chief Pilot – ATL CPO
From: Captain Charles Boyajian
Subject: II24-093: Aircraft Damage – Damage to aircraft left winglet.
DL105 31AUG24 ATL-GRU N808NW A-330-300 (3308)
CAP: BOYAJIAN, C.A.; **FO:** SCHELLENBERGER, W.J.; **FO:** WINKELS, M.C.

This statement is provided at the request of the Chief Pilot's Office.

I was Captain of Delta Air Lines Flight 105 from ATL-GRU on 31AUG2024.

We taxied south on Ramp 5 in ATL. Ground issued taxi instructions to runway 27R via L and LA. Shortly after we joined L, they instructed us to give way to a Virgin A350 who also received instructions for 27R via L and LA.

Virgin was taxiing at about 9-10 knots and we closed to about 300' feet behind them and then matched their speed. With us both now on the tower frequency, Virgin called and informed tower that they would need time to get new numbers for runway 27R.

We already had our takeoff data for runway 27R at the LC intersection, therefore, I had my First Officer (FO) inform tower that we were fine to use LC. Tower then amended our instructions to proceed L and LC to 27R. At LC and with adequate spacing and both of us at the same speed on L heading to separate turns, I transitioned my scan to turn onto LC and to clear any traffic on taxiway M. About halfway through the turn, I scanned back to the Virgin and was surprised to see that they had either stopped or slowed even more while still on L and were not continuing onto LA as cleared. I reflexively applied extra brakes and tightened my turn. As I looked back and focused on my wingtip, it was already clear and beyond their tail. While the spacing had closed, it did not feel or appear that we had made contact. The condition of my winglet appeared fine, so I believed that it was a close call.

We were cleared onto the runway for takeoff and it proceeded uneventfully. Approximately 40 minutes into the flight, one of our flight attendants called and informed me that the passenger seated in 34A thought we made contact with our wingtip during the turn on the ground. She also said that he had a photograph of the winglet.

The photo appeared to be taken in flight on our departure, and although a little bit blurry, it did show something unusual on the top edge of the winglet. By now it was quite dark outside and there was no way to directly observe the winglet. The wing lights were not strong enough to illuminate that surface, so I relied on the photograph as my primary source.

At this point I transferred control of the aircraft to the FO and initiated A SATVOICE call to the company to talk with both dispatch and maintenance. Given the data at that time, and the fact that there were no unusual flight characteristics whatsoever, the decision to continue to GRU was agreed upon with dispatch, maintenance, and our OCC leadership. I also gave them identifying information about the other aircraft for them to follow up. The rest of the flight was entirely unremarkable, with no concerns raised by any passengers. I briefed some of the crew members about the nature and function of the winglets, and that even with some potential damage as seen in the picture, there was no adverse effect on the airworthiness of the aircraft, or our ability to continue. Post flight in GRU revealed some limited damage to the winglet, but from the cockpit vantage point it was not visible, even in daylight.

I acknowledge release of this statement to the [Delta Flight Safety Team](#). And the [National Transportation Safety Board \(NTSB\)](#).

Regards,

Captain Charles Boyajian
Employee [REDACTED]
(Signature on file)



Internal Memorandum

Date: 9/09/2024

To: Captain Doug Martin, Director & Chief Pilot – ATL CPO
From: First Officer William Schellenberger
Subject: II24-093: Aircraft Damage – Damage to aircraft left winglet.
DL105 31AUG24 ATL-GRU N808NW A-330-300 (3308)
CAP: BOYAJIAN, C.A.; **FO:** SCHELLENBERGER, W.J.; **FO:** WINKELS, M.C.

This statement is provided at the request of the Chief Pilot's Office.

I was First Officer of Delta Air Lines Flight 105 from ATL-GRU on 31AUG2024.

I was the relief pilot sitting in the jumpseat with seat belt and shoulder harnesses on during this matter, so the view to the side is very limited.

We were taxiing out behind a Virgin A350 on taxiway L towards runway 27R and told to hold short behind Virgin on taxiway LA. The Virgin aircraft was having some issues and was taxiing very slowly. They requested some additional time before being ready for takeoff.

We informed ATC that we could depart via intersection LC. We were then cleared to hold short of 27R on LC. As the Virgin aircraft continued taxiing slowly down taxiway L, well past LC, we made our right turn onto LC. Tower instructed another aircraft on taxiway M to give way to us on LC. I was clearing to the right looking for this aircraft as we were crossing taxiway M to get to the runway hold short line.

As we began our turn, I noticed that the Virgin aircraft's right wing stopped moving and I informed the crew at the controls. Given my location, all I could see was the right side of the fuselage and wing, but as we continued to make our right turn, I felt what is consistent with a sharp turn or asymmetric braking in the turn and did not feel like anything was out of normal aircraft operations.

Takeoff and departure off runway 27R was uneventful, and passing 18,000' I departed the flight deck for rest. Upon returning from rest, I was informed of a possible wingtip fairing scrape based on a passenger's picture, but that there was no significant damage, or cause for concern. We were cleared to continue. We landed uneventfully at our destination.

I acknowledge release of this statement to the [Delta Flight Safety Team](#). And the [National Transportation Safety Board \(NTSB\)](#).

Regards,

First Officer William Schellenberger
Employee [REDACTED]
(Signature on file)



Internal Memorandum

Date: 9/11/2024

To: Captain Doug Martin, Director & Chief Pilot – ATL CPO
From: First Officer Matthew Winkels [REDACTED]
Subject: II24-093: Aircraft Damage – Damage to aircraft left winglet.
DL105 31AUG24 ATL-GRU N808NW A-330-300 (3308)
CAP: BOYAJIAN, C.A.; **FO:** SCHELLENBERGER, W.J.; **FO:** WINKELS, M.C.

This statement is provided at the request of the Chief Pilot's Office.

I was the First Officer, and Pilot Monitoring (PM) of Delta Air Lines Flight 105 from ATL-GRU on 31AUG2024.

Eastbound on L, we were told to give way to a Virgin widebody. We complied and realized that they were taxiing very slowly at 8-10kts. The Captain had to regularly ride the brakes to match their slow speed.

Virgin indicated to ATC they needed more time and needed to pull over. While still moving east on L, they slowed down further, near LC.

We already had the performance data loaded for the intersection departure on runway 27R @ LC, so I asked the Captain if I should request a LC intersection departure from tower, to avoid being stuck behind Virgin while they sorted things out. He said yes. My request with tower was approved, and we were cleared to turn on LC for a 27R @ LC departure.

The next right turn was LC. Virgin was close but we had comfortable spacing between us, with them ahead near LB still moving eastbound on L, albeit even slower. The Captain initiated the right turn (South) with adequate clearance ahead, and then the relief pilot noted either that Virgin was slowing or stopped, prior to where you would expect them to come to a full stop further east by LA. The Captain was looking out his window and later said he could see the wingtip and that it looked all clear. The time was approximately 1944L.

In the turn there was a mild 'shudder' that felt as if we were running over an uneven taxi surface or had some kind of abnormal/differential braking. We observed no indication that we had just made contact with the Virgin widebody, nor did we feel as if we had.

We were cleared for takeoff at 27R-LC and the flight proceeded with a normal takeoff, departure, and cruise.

Approximately 50 minutes into the flight, a Flight Attendant (FA) called from mid-cabin and reported to the Captain that a passenger claimed to have seen our left wingtip make contact with Virgin prior to takeoff, and had a picture of the damaged wingtip. This was a complete surprise and the Captain and I wanted to see the picture. Eventually, we were presented with a slightly grainy/blurry and low contrast picture of the wingtip that the passenger took. I could not tell definitively that I was seeing damage on the image. The Captain was not as convinced and noted the top of the winglet appearing uneven in the picture. He tried using wing lights, but the winglets were pitch black in the night sky in-flight.

I looked at our fuel burn being within an acceptable range vs the release estimates (no progressively worse fuel burns as we had crossed reporting points). There was no vibration, flutter, noise, or any abnormal flying characteristics that I could perceive.

The Captain assigned me with both the flight controls and the radio, while he called dispatch and maintenance via Atlanta Radio on SATCOM. Eventually it was decided by all parties that it would be safe to continue to GRU.

We continued through cruise, descent, approach, and landing with no further issues and no actual indication that there was indeed any damage to the aircraft.

Once on the ground and after passengers disembarked, the Captain and I quickly made our way to the mid cabin to look at the wing. The Captain noted scraping and possibly a small tear. Once he checked the winglet outside, he did note more extensive damage than what we could see inside.

I acknowledge release of this statement to the [Delta Flight Safety Team](#) and to the [National Transportation Safety Board \(NTSB\)](#).

Regards,

First Officer Matthew Winkels
Employee [REDACTED]
(Signature on file)