

# **Qantas Grounds A380 After Finding Wing Cracks**

Kristen Gelineau, Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — Australia's Qantas Airways said Wednesday it was temporarily grounding one of its A380 superjumbos after discovering dozens of hairline cracks in its wings during a maintenance inspection.

The Australian flagship carrier said the 36 small fissures posed no threat to safety, and that the cracks were different from the cracks that manufacturer Airbus found in metal brackets inside the wings of two jets last month. That discovery prompted Europe's air safety authority to order the inspection of nearly a third of the world's A380s.

Qantas workers found the cracks, measuring less than 0.8 inches (2 centimeters) long, in the "wing rib feet" — the metal brackets that connect the wing's ribs to its skin — after the aircraft hit severe turbulence on a flight from London to Singapore last month. The cracks were not related to the turbulence and were linked to an Airbus manufacturing issue, the airline said in a statement.

Qantas conducted routine checks after the turbulence incident, then conducted "additional precautionary inspections" on the wings at Airbus' request, the airline said. The cracking was discovered in the precautionary inspections, Qantas said.

Qantas is working to repair the cracks and said it expects the plane to be back in the air within a week.

Qantas spokesman Tom Woodward said the cracks are the same type the airline recently found in the wing ribs of an A380 that is being repaired in Singapore following the disintegration of an engine in midflight in 2010. The 2010 engine failure was the most significant safety issue an A380 has faced since it began passenger flights in 2007, and prompted airlines to temporarily ground 20 of the planes.

When asked whether the recent discovery would prompt Qantas inspections of all 12 of its A380s, Woodward suggested they would not.

"The current European regulatory directive requires airlines to inspect A380s once they exceed 1,300 flight cycles," Woodward said in an email. "Currently, no Qantas A380 has completed more than 1,300 flight cycles."

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