NTSB: Anti-Collision Aids Needed For Large Planes

Jennifer C. Kerr, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The National Transportation Safety Board wants to see ground collision warning systems on all large commercial airliners.

The board recommended Wednesday that the Federal Aviation Administration require large airplanes to be equipped with collision avoidance tools, such as an on-board externally-mounted camera system that would give the pilot a clear view of the plane's wingtips. This comes after several mishaps at U.S. airports involving planes colliding with one another while taxiing.

One collision, in July 2011 at Boston's Logan International Airport, sent a woman to the hospital with neck pain after the wing of a large moving passenger jet clipped the tail of a smaller aircraft in front of it. Both planes, a Delta flight and an Atlantic Southeast Airlines flight, sustained damage.

No injuries were reported in the two other collisions being investigated by the NTSB — one in Chicago and the other in New York.

The recommendation covers bigger aircraft, such as the Boeing 747, 757, 767 and 777; the Airbus A380; and the McDonnell Douglas MD-10 and MD-11. The pilot cannot see the plane's wingtips from the cockpit on these airplanes.

The anti-collision aids should be installed on newly manufactured planes and retrofitted on existing ones, the safety board said. The board did not assess the costs involved.

NTSB Chairman Deborah Hersman said in a statement that such a system can provide "real-time information on wingtip clearance" from other obstacles.

"While collision warning systems are now common in highway vehicles, it is important for the aviation industry to consider their application in large aircraft," she said.

In the New York collision, the wing of a plane operated by Air France clipped a regional jet flown by Comair on a wet tarmac at John F. Kennedy International Airport in April 2011. The smaller plane was sent spinning about 90 degrees, but no one was injured.

In the mishap at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, the wing of a cargo plane clipped the rudder of an American Eagle flight in May. No one was hurt.

The FAA has 90 days to respond to the safety board's recommendation.

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