

REPORT OF THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD

of the

Investigation of an Accident Involving Aircraft in
Air Carrier Operation

An airline accident, which resulted in substantial damage to a Douglas DC3-G102 airplane, NC 16018, owned and operated by American Airlines, Inc., occurred on May 21, 1942, at about 11:22 p.m. (CWT), at the Municipal Airport, Little Rock, Arkansas. No injuries were received by any of the twenty-two passengers or the crew of three. The crew consisted of Captain Linwood P. Hudson, First Officer George Paul Eckardt, both of whom were properly certificated and appropriately rated, and Stewardess Gracia North.

The flight, designated by American Airlines as Trip 11, originated at New York, New York, with Fort Worth, Texas, as its destination. Several intermediate stops were made, including the one at Little Rock. The flight proceeded normally until the landing at Municipal Airport, Little Rock, Arkansas, at approximately 11:20 p.m. While the ship was being taxied to the loading ramp, the right wheel dropped into a newly constructed ditch, located about 50 feet east of the ramp.

The airport control tower operator had communicated with Captain Hudson during the landing approach, advising him that he was cleared to taxi to the ramp; however, he did not inform him of a newly constructed ditch, or of the fact that the smudge pot marking the extreme southern end of the construction work was not burning. A company employee was directing the crew with a flashlight to the position in which the ship was to be parked, and had signaled the captain to proceed. He subsequently stated that he had not seen the ditch and did not know it was there, nor had he observed that the smudge pot was not burning. The captain, occupying the left seat, was directing his attention to the clearance of his wing tip and that of another American Airlines plane parked on the south end of the ramp. The first officer stated that he had observed the pile of earth near the south end of the construction work, but did not see the ditch adjacent to it until the plane was only a few feet away. He immediately informed the captain but it was too late to avoid the accident.

American Airlines has a standard procedure requiring station managers to make daily and frequent inspections of airports where construction work is being done, and keep a current map posted showing such work. The map had been prepared in the morning but did not show the ditch adjacent to the taxi strip. The airport manager did not file a notice to airmen, and did not notify the airport control tower or American Airlines personnel regarding the construction of the drainage ditch.

Investigation indicated that the crew of Trip 11 used due caution while taxiing to the ramp, and was in no way responsible for the accident.

PROBABLE CAUSE: Failure of American Airlines ground crew to inform the captain of Trip 11 of the construction work adjacent to the ramp, and to guide him past those hazards.

- CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:
- (1) Failure of airport manager to publish a notice to airmen and properly inform the airport control tower regarding construction of the ditch.
 - (2) Failure of the control tower operator to observe the hazard and to properly advise the incoming trip.

BY THE BOARD

/s/ Darwin Charles Brown
Secretary