

## **Cockpit Smoke Brings Widebody Close to Ditching Over Atlantic.**

Author/s:

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On a July 26 flight from the Caribbean to London's Gatwick Airport, the cockpit of a Caledonian Airways DC-10 with 356 passengers aboard started filling up with smoke about midnight over the Atlantic. According to sources, the crew put out a mayday and shortly afterward advised New York Oceanic Control that they "may have to ditch." The airplane descended from 34,000 ft. to 20,000 ft., and the passengers were advised that due to a "technical problem" the airplane would divert to the Azores, said Caledonian's Sue Lister.

According to one account, a dead-heading training captain and the flight engineer crawled down into the electronics and equipment (E&E) bay and opened up the outflow valve to clear the smoke.

The airplane landed at Lajes. The presence of two additional crewmembers is said to have made all the difference in the outcome - as compared to the tragic result with Swissair flight 111, where the 2-man crew of the MD-11 may have been overwhelmed by events.

One source relates that minutes spelled the difference between resolving the emergency or ending up in the Atlantic Ocean.

Lister said the incident was caused by "lint or dust" behind the flight engineer's panel that started to smolder. "This never got to a fire, and there is nothing wrong with the wiring," Lister said. The airplane (G-GOKT, fondly known as Go-Kart) "has had a good clean-up" and is back in service, she said.

Since the airplane landed on Portuguese territory, that country has primary investigative authority. Britain's Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) is participating in the inquiry.

The incident bears a striking similarity to the November 1998 in-flight fire on a Delta Airlines [DAL] L-1011 en route from Honolulu to San Francisco, where a thick blanketing of lint on wiring behind the flight engineer's control panel contributed to the severity of the event (see ASW, July 12). >> Caledonian, tel. + 44 1883 624 015 <<