

Aircraft damaged by ground handling vehicle, Boeing 737-800, PH-HXJ

Rotterdam The Hague Airport, 2 January 2023

At around 21.40 hours, following landing, the Boeing 737-800 was stood on apron B2 at Rotterdam The Hague Airport. The passengers had disembarked from the aircraft but the crew were still on board.

One of the vehicles from the ground handling company reversed towards the aircraft, in order to empty the aircraft's toilet tank. During the reversing manoeuvre, the driver stopped after hearing a series of unusual beeps. After consulting with his employer, the driver carefully continued reversing. During this manoeuvre, the platform on the back of the vehicle started to rise, of its own accord. As a consequence, a section of the railing around the platform punched a hole in the fuselage of the aircraft.²⁷

The platform can only be operated from outside the vehicle. Besides the driver, who was sat in the cab, no one was in the vicinity of the vehicle. Following a technical investigation of the vehicle and the platform by the ground handling company, together with the manufacturer, no cause was discovered for the spontaneous rising of the platform.

The Dutch Safety Board has not further investigated this occurrence.

Classification: Accident

Reference: 2023001



▲ The platform and the damaged aircraft fuselage.
(Source: Rotterdam The Hague Airport)

²⁷ Because the crew were still on board the aircraft, and given the nature of the damage, pursuant to the applicable definitions, this was identified as an aviation accident.