ASRS Reports on Wake Vortex Encounters

WakeNet USA
October 20 & 21, 2010
Wake Vortex Reporting to ASRS

- 199 reports received to date
  - 129 Structured Callbacks completed through Oct 1 2010
  - 29 Structured Callbacks completed since last WakeNet Meeting (March 2010)

Through funding from FAA AJR-53, NASA’s Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS) is examining Wake Vortex Encounter incidents reported to ASRS. The scope of this effort which began in March 2007 includes:

- Any U.S. locations including airports (any runway configuration with enhanced effort on closely-spaced parallel and in-trail runway configurations) and the enroute environment
- All aircraft types experiencing a wake encounter

In order to provide the level of detail needed to fully understand these hazards and the factors affecting them, ASRS Expert Analysts will contact pilots who report wake vortex encounters to ASRS to request their voluntary participation in completing a web-based supplemental question set (or “by phone” option). All identifying information (names, company affiliations, etc.) will be removed before ASRS research data is provided to the FAA.

Some of the factors to be analyzed will include magnitude of wake encounter, aircraft spacing, aircraft type, runway configuration, and consequences from the encounter.

NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System
129 Unique Events – August 2007 to Oct 1, 2010
  • 1 Supplemental Question Set completed for each event
Majority Air Carrier Operations (n=95)
  • Remaining were Air Taxi, Corporate, FBO, Fractional, and Personal
Majority were passenger operations (n=109) [see Figure]
There were 11 events reported by pilots of single-crew aircraft, 114 by pilots of multi-crew aircraft
Flight Segment at Wake Encounter

**Flight Segment**

*Wake Encounter Aircraft*
- 88 in **Terminal Area**
  - 60 on Arrival; 28 on Departure
- 41 **Enroute**

**Runway Change**

*Wake Encounter Aircraft*
*Terminal only*
3 aircraft received a runway change prior to WVE and 85 did not

![Graph showing the distribution of flight segments and runway changes.](diagram.png)
Terminal Operations

(88 in Terminal Area: 60 on Arrival & 28 on Departure)
Terminal Operations
ARRIVAL (n=60)
Airport Information - Arrival

- **Airport Identifier**
  - LAX (n=11); ORD (n=6); ATL (n=4); SNA (n=4); SFO (n=4); CLT (n=3); and others

- **Distance from Runway**
  - Within 5 miles (n=31); 7+ Miles (n=25); 10+ Miles (n=21)

- **Wind Speed**
  - Majority of the winds were calm (n=13) or light / below 10 knots (n=21).
Notable Reporter Comments

(A CRJ-701 behind an A320 at 3500 MSL on arrival to CLT)

- **Report Narrative**: …*Being vectored on to the RWY 23 approach in CLT the approach controller put us on and cleared us for the approach 4.5 miles in trail of another a/c. She assigned us 160 kts till LECAR. She handed us over to the tower and that's when the event started, the aircraft started to roll right then left 40 degrees and it got worse for approx. a minute or two. Once we got the a/c under control I called the tower and asked what type of aircraft we were behind. I was told an A320. I informed him that we had been through severe wake turbulence. … Someone is gonna get killed if something isn't done. I understand the idea of moving the traffic but this is not safe. Maybe the approach controllers should advise of the a/c type ahead and provide at least 5 mile in trail all the way to the runway.*

Additional information from response to SQS C.15: This is becoming more and more common it seems on departure as well as arrival in KCLT. This event was the worst i have yet to experience. 4.5 miles in trail on the approach behind this airbus on a hot calm day was not sufficient space to stay out of the wake.

Additional information from response to SQS C.16: It seems that the A320-321 series a/c produce a lot of wake. There needs to be some criteria similar to the criteria behind B757's for these types of a/c. I am very much concerned that someone will be hurt before criteria is established. –ACN 897674
Distance from Wake Producing Aircraft - Arrival

Nautical Miles

Number of Events

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 10 12

3 3 4 9 4 12 7 1 3 3 5 6

Not Stated/Unk

n=60
Altitude of Wake Encountering and Wake Producing Aircraft - Arrival

Altitude at Time of Encounter (MSL)

- **Wake Encountering**
- **Wake Producing**

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n=60

Oct 1, 2010
Altitude of Wake Encountering and Wake Producing Aircraft (0-5000 MSL) - Arrival

Number of Aircraft

Altitude at Time of Encounter (MSL)
Distance from Runway - Arrival

Number of Events

Nautical Miles

0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10+  Not Stated

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<th>Nautical Miles</th>
<th>Number of Events</th>
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n=60

Oct 1, 2010
### Encounters in Terminal Airspace - Arrival

#### Wake Encountering Aircraft Weight Category

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<tr>
<th>Wake Producing Aircraft Weight Category</th>
<th>Heavy (H)</th>
<th>757</th>
<th>Large (L)</th>
<th>Small (S)</th>
<th>Unknown (U)</th>
<th>Total for Generating Category</th>
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n=60
Terminal Operations
DEPARTURE (n=28)
Airport Information - Departure

- Airport Identifier
  - PHL (n=4), DFW (n=3), LAS (n=4), SNA (n=2), ORD (n=2), ATL (n=2) and others

- Wind Speed
  - The majority of the winds (n=9) were under ten knots, light and variable, or calm; however, four pilots reported winds between 15 to 20 knots.
Distance from Wake Producing Aircraft - Departure

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

- 0-2 nautical miles: 1 event
- 3-4 nautical miles: 2 events
- 5 nautical miles: 5 events
- 6 nautical miles: 1 event
- 7 nautical miles: 1 event
- 12+ nautical miles: 2 events
- Not Stated: 8 events

Total: 28 events

Oct 1, 2010
Altitude of Wake Encountering and Wake Producing Aircraft - Departure

Altitude at Time of Encounter (MSL)

- Wake Encountering
- Wake Producing

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<th>Wake Encountering</th>
<th>Wake Producing</th>
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n=28
Altitude of Wake Encountering and Wake Producing Aircraft (0-5000 MSL) - Departure
## Encounters in Terminal Airspace - Departure

### Wake Encountering Aircraft Weight Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wake Producing Aircraft Weight Category</th>
<th>Heavy (H)</th>
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Enroute Operations

(n=41)
Distance from Wake Producing Aircraft - Enroute

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

Number of Events

Nautical Miles

Oct 1, 2010
As a result of this experience, I usually make a practice of leveling 100 FT high when in this situation, especially if the winds aloft are less than 10-15 KTS. Based on conditions during these encounters, I am extra vigilant to the likelihood of an wake encounter whenever the winds are a quartering tail as I perceive the wake may be being "held up" by the atmospheric conditions. - ACN 848630

I believe that this encounter was caused by climbing along an airway close behind a heavy aircraft in a light quartering tailwind. This highlights the importance of the wake turbulence research which is being done. In the future, I will pay attention to airplanes much further ahead. –ACN 759718
Direction of Wake Producing Aircraft - Enroute

- Same Direction: 29 responses
- Crossing: 7 responses
- Opposite Direction: 0 responses
- Left Blank: 2 responses
- Unknown (New 04/09): 3 responses

*Unknown was added as a new selection choice in the April 2009 revision to the SQS
Altitude of Wake Encountering and Wake Producing Aircraft - Enroute

Altitude at Time of Encounter (MSL)

*1 aircraft encountered wake at 2 altitudes-- 10,500 MSL and 25,500 feet MSL (aircraft producing wake was 4,000 feet higher for each encounter)
Flight Phase of Wake Producing and Wake Encountering Aircraft - Enroute

- Both Level: 14
- Both Descending: 9
- WE Level / WP Descending: 5
- WE Climbing / WP Level: 5
- Both Climbing: 4
- WE Level / WP Climbing: 2
- WE Descending / WP Level: 1
- WE Level / WP Unknown: 1

n=41
## Encounters in En Route Airspace - Enroute

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<th>Wake Producing Aircraft Weight Category</th>
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\( n = 41 \)
Effects and Consequences of Wake Encounters

(n=129)
Pilot Assessment of the Magnitude of Wake Encounter

- Light: 27
- Moderate: 53
- Severe: 48

n = 129

Increasing Severity
Effects on Aircraft categories are not mutually exclusive. A single event may be coded as having more than 1 consequence. 80 pilots did not report an effect on the aircraft.
1 event categorized as EXTREME
49 events categorized as SEVERE
  - Single event maximums
    - Maximum reported heading change of 80°
    - Maximum reported pitch change of 45-50°
    - Maximum reported roll change of 110°
    - Maximum reported yaw change of 30°
53 events categorized as MODERATE
27 events categorized as LIGHT
Max reported altitude loss was 1200 ft
Max reported altitude gain was 500 ft
Effect on Autopilot

*Prior to April 2009 question update that distinguished between pilot disengaging or aircraft automatically disengaging. In April 2009, Question C.8 was revised to clarify automatic vs manual disengagement. It reads: C.8 If autopilot was engaged, did the wake encounter cause it to disengage? O Yes, disengaged automatically; O Yes, disengaged manually by pilot; O No; O Not Applicable
Consequences of WVE

- Consequence categories are displayed in the order they are presented in the Supplemental Question Set (SQS).
- \( n = 126 \). Consequence categories are not mutually exclusive. A single event may be coded as having more than 1 consequence.
- **“Temporary”** was added in April 2009 based on pilot feedback.

**Chart:**
- No Significant Consequences: 41
- Temporary Loss of Aircraft Control*: 20
- Deviation from track/heading/altitude*: 19
- Executed Go Around: 13
- Physical Injury: 10
- Unstabilized Approach: 10
- Aircraft Damage: 4
- Landed long and / or fast: 3
- Conflict with Another Aircraft: 3
- Near collision with ground / obstacles: 2
- Missed Approach: 2

**Note:**
- *Temporary* was added in April 2009 based on pilot feedback.
Report Narrative: … We were following a B747 on a visual approach by 4.5 miles. We encountered wake turbulence at about the time we usually put the gear down. We encountered it again at 1000 feet one dot above the glide slope and I remembered being annoyed that the B747 was high on glide slope. We missed the 1000 foot call. At 700 feet the gear warning bell sounded and we put the gear down before 500 feet... Fortunately, the system worked and we landed safely. –ACN 899943
Notable Reporter Comments

(A 737-800 10+ miles behind a B767-300 at 2500 feet on arrival to LAX)

Report Narrative: ...We were initially cleared for the ILS 25L approach ... to follow a B767 7 miles in front of us. ATC provided us the requisite caution wake turbulence following the heavy alert information. .. Shortly after the automated '2500 FT' audio call we experienced our first wake turbulence related roll. The pilot flying was already flying ½ dot to one dot high on the glideslope to risk mitigate the wake turbulence. Winds were calm at altitude and remained below 5 KTS and aligned with the runway throughout the approach and landing...

Shortly after passing LIMMA we experienced our second, much more pronounced and persistent roll associated with the heavy's wake turbulence....I failed to respond to [my] normal habit pattern because of my focus on the B767 in front of us and our flight path in relation to the heavy's. Consequently we landed without acknowledging ATC's 'cleared to land' call and I didn't realize it until we rolled out onto the high speed taxiway...That series of decisions drew my focus to the remainder of the approach and I believe was the critical event which distracted me to the point my clearance to land mnemonic wasn't accomplished and consequently the ATC clearance not acknowledged. ACN-897473

Oct 1, 2010