



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Aviation  
Administration**

# SAFO

Safety Alert for Operators

SAFO 12002  
DATE: 4/16/12

Flight Standards Service  
Washington, DC

[http://www.faa.gov/other\\_visit/aviation\\_industry/airline\\_operators/airline\\_safety/info](http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/info)

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*A SAFO contains important safety information and may include recommended action. SAFO content should be especially valuable to air carriers in meeting their statutory duty to provide service with the highest possible degree of safety in the public interest. Besides the specific action recommended in a SAFO, an alternative action may be as effective in addressing the safety issue named in the SAFO.*

**Subject:** Painted-over Ball-lock Release Pins on Over-wing Escape Slide Doors

**Purpose:** This SAFO serves to alert Airbus A318/319/320 and A321 series airplane operators of a safety concern regarding over-wing escape slides and painted-over ball-lock release-pins.

**Background:** During a routine A-Check on an Airbus A319 series aircraft, maintenance personnel noticed that the ball-lock release-pins on the over-wing escape slide doors were painted over. Subsequently, 10 Airbus A319 and A320 series aircraft operated by different Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR), part 121 air carriers were inspected for and found to have painted-over ball-lock release-pins on the over-wing escape slide doors. In addition, three other aircraft had painted-over ball-lock release pins. With the recent history of airline mergers, multiple aircraft are subject to repainting, which may lead to more painted-over ball-lock release-pins.

**Discussion:** The over-wing escape slides on A318, A319, and A320 series aircraft are housed in a wing-to-body fairing compartment, located above of and aft of the inboard trailing edge flaps. The slide compartment door panel, which is hinged at the bottom of the slide container assembly, is held closed by three separate ball-type release pins located inside individual pin housings. These pin housings are located along the upper edge of each door panel. Pneumatic servos move the ball-lock release pins inside their pin housing to the “unlatch” position. This action opens the slide compartment door and allows the over-wing escape slide to fall out and inflate on the wing.

It is possible that the paint could impede the movement of the ball-lock inner spindle, which could affect the slide’s deployment as well as the released timing of the ball-lock release pin from its hold on the enclosure door. If the ball-lock release pins fail to release, due to paint or another malfunction, it could damage or destroy the over-wing escape slide door. If any fractured door components remain in place, this could damage the over-wing escape slide, preventing it from properly inflating. In addition, if the over-wing escape slide does not inflate properly or fails to inflate, the evacuation process could be impeded.

**Recommended Action:** It is recommended that operators of these series of airplanes ensure that their maintenance personnel and providers are aware of the following:

- Precautions outlined in manufacturer manuals for repainting this series of airplanes,
- The requirement to protect certain parts of the aircraft against paint, and
- Ball-lock release pins on over-wing escape slide doors on Airbus A318/A319/A320/A321 series aircraft should be clean and free of paint upon installation and inspection.

**Contact:** Questions or comments regarding this SAFO should be directed to the Aircraft Maintenance Division, AFS-300, at (202) 267-1675.