

Airbus issues warning for holiday travel

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: Europe's Airbus said on Friday (Nov 28) it is ordering an immediate software update for a large number of its best-selling A320 family jets, a move that industry sources said would affect around 6,000 aircraft, or more than half of the global fleet.

In a statement Airbus said, recent incident involving an A320-family aircraft had revealed that intense solar radiation may corrupt data critical to the functioning of flight controls.

"Airbus acknowledges these recommendations will lead to operational disruptions to passengers and customers," the company said.

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency will issue an emergency airworthiness directive, Airbus said.

For about two-thirds of the affected jets, the recall will result in a relatively brief grounding as airlines revert to a previous software

version, industry sources said.

But the scale of the operation is expected to cause significant disruption, emerging just ahead of the busiest travel weekend of the year in the United States.

Hundreds of jets may also have to have hardware changed, leading to weeks out of service.

Airlines to be affected

A Wizz Air spokesperson confirmed that some of its aircraft are among those that require a software upgrade, as flagged by Airbus. The airline has already scheduled the necessary maintenance and some flights may be disrupted over the weekend.

Air India issued an advisory, warning passengers of potential delays in their operations.

"We are aware of a directive from Airbus related to its A320 family aircraft currently in-service across airline operators. This will result in a software/hardware realignment on a part of our fleet, leading to longer turnaround time and delays to our scheduled operations. Air India regrets any inconvenience this may cause to passengers till the reset is carried out across the fleet," they said.

They requested customers to check their flight status on their website before heading to the airport and connect with their contact centre for any further assistance.

The incident that triggered the sweeping repair action involved a JetBlue flight from Cancun, Mexico, to Newark, New Jersey, on October 30, industry sources said.

Flight 1230 made an emergency landing at Tampa, Florida, and several people were taken to hospital after a flight control problem and a sudden uncommanded drop in altitude.

According to Airbus data, there are around 11,300 A320-family aircraft in operation, including 6,440 of the core A320 model.

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