

Aircraft Vortex Damage Policy

06th January 2011

Introduction

Gatwick Airport Ltd has had in place for some years now an internal policy for vortex strike damage as part of a voluntary commitment by the airport to the local community, this is a standard industry practice. Legally liability for any vortex strike damage sits with the airline which has caused the damage. However Gatwick Airport Ltd recognises it may not always be possible to identify a specific aircraft and therefore are now formalising and publishing our policy for handling this issue in order to ensure the local residential community is informed and able to apply for assistance.

Background

Wing-tip vortices are circulating currents of air created by the passage of aircraft through the sky. All aircraft give rise to wing-tip vortices, but in most cases they are broken up before they reach the ground. In certain weather conditions, vortices can run to ground level.

It is possible for wing-tip vortices to make contact with the roofs of properties close to the airport. They can occasionally cause the movement and slippage of roof tiles, this is known as vortex damage.

Although legal responsibility for damage caused by aircraft, including vortex damage, rests with the operator of the aircraft concerned, identification of the operator concerned is not always possible in the case of vortex damage. This is mainly due to the fact that the precise time of the vortex making contact with the roof may not be known, and thus may be potentially attributable to a number of aircraft within a given time period. In recognition of this circumstance, and in the interests of being a good neighbour, Gatwick Airport Ltd commits to providing an ex gratia response to reported vortex damage in accordance with the conditions described in this policy document. The provision by Gatwick Airport Ltd of the assistance set out in this policy does not constitute acceptance of liability.

Reporting Methods Available to the Public

If a member of the public suspects that they have suffered vortex damage to their roof they should call Gatwick Airport Ltd on 0800 393 070. Alternatively they can send an email to lgwnoise_line@gatwickairport.com.

The following information will be required:

- the property owner's name, address and telephone number
- the exact time of occurrence or if not known the time and date the damage was first noticed,

- the extent and nature of the damage,
- details of the aircraft concerned, if known,
- details of why the complainant believes vortex damage was responsible for the incident.

Gatwick Airport Ltd will contribute towards roof repairs as described below provided there is clear evidence that the roof damage was caused by a vortex strike. It is therefore essential that the damage to the roof can be illustrated by means of photographs prior to any replacement or movement of broken or dislodged tiles. No contribution will be made in the absence of such evidence.

First-line Response: Emergency Roof Repairs

Where an emergency roof repair (to return the roof to a weather-proof state) is reported Gatwick Airport Ltd will commission, one of our accredited roofing works suppliers to visit the property. Prior to the repairs taking place photographic evidence of the pattern of damage will be obtained by the roofing works suppliers so that this can be passed on to our professional vortex assessors.

Follow-up Response: Analysis by Professional Vortex Assessors

Gatwick Airport Ltd will appoint vortex assessors to consider photographic evidence and/or visit the property concerned to determine whether or not the damage has been caused by a vortex strike. Damage associated with vortex strikes is generally easily differentiated from other forms of damage that may be related to natural climatic events, natural wear and tear or impact damage.

If it is determined that the damage is not related to a vortex-strike incident, then a record will be made of this and no further action will be taken. In these circumstances the property owner will be responsible for the entirety of the costs of repair. Where the vortex assessor advises that the damage has been caused by vortex, repairs carried out through one of our accredited roofing works suppliers will be paid for by Gatwick Airport Ltd, .Gatwick Airport Ltd will have no liability for any work carried out. Any liability in contract or tort and any guarantees of workmanship and roof performance will be owed by the appointed roofing contractor to the owner of the property.

Assessment by Specialist Roofing Contractor and Re-roofing Offer

In circumstances where a given property has been the recipient of vortex-related damage on more than one occasion, Gatwick Airport Ltd may offer the option of commissioning our appointed roofing contractor to provide a replacement roof covering which is specially designed, so as to provide greater protection against vortex-related roof damage in the future. Gatwick Airport Ltd however reserves the right to limit its remediation to a simple like-for-like replacement of roof covering. If the replacement option is offered, then this would be subject to

- any landlord finding the works as described acceptable, and
- planning approval (if required) being granted for the change in roofing and/or exterior aspect

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Subject to the above terms and conditions being met, Gatwick Airport Ltd will pay in full for the works as laid out in the quotation.

Gatwick Airport Ltd will have no liability for any work carried out. Any liability in contract or tort and any guarantees of workmanship and roof performance will be owed by the appointed roofing contractor to the owner of the property. Gatwick Airport Ltd will not be liable for any damage to a roof which has been designed for extra vortex protection as described above. Although such works give greater protection to the roof against damage by aircraft vortices, and other climatic events, they do not give a guarantee of no further damage.

Properties covered

Any domestic property, school, church or hospital affected by a confirmed Gatwick Airport vortex strike is covered under this policy, including homes situated above commercial properties.

Commercial Properties

The above provisions relating to ex gratia payments will only apply to the types of properties listed above. Gatwick Airport Ltd will not pay for any repairs to commercial properties. However Gatwick Airport Ltd will provide any available information on flights operating during the time of roof damage incidents that may be required by owners of commercial properties affected.

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