Airbus has received reports of cabin attendants falling through the avionics hatch door located in the cockpit, when it is open for maintenance purposes. In most of the cases the cabin attendant hurt him/herself only slightly and could continue his/her duty. But there were also some occurrences where the cabin attendant couldn’t continue his/her duty. In 2001, an OIT (ref.: AI/SE 999.0002/01) was published to inform operators about such events and to provide some general recommendations. In addition, Airbus has developed a device that should contribute to prevent such mishaps.

The avionics compartment access hatch is located in the cockpit behind the captain’s seat. It opens upwards from front to back. When the hatch is open, it rests vertically and covers approximately 80% of the corridor width. This makes the hatch position noticeable and requires care to be taken to move around it when entering the cockpit. Therefore anyone entering the cockpit while the hatch is open should notice it (see fig. 1 and 2).

Figure 1: Open access hatch seen from cockpit door (prototype of protective arm shown)

Figure 2: Open access hatch seen from behind the first officer’s seat
The reports received by Airbus about a cabin attendant falling into the hatch are not very detailed, but usually the cabin attendant entered the cockpit to provide some beverage to the flight crew, he/she stepped in the open hatch not realizing that there was a “hole” or fell in when stepping backwards to leave the cockpit. Airbus decided to develop a protective device to help airlines prevent such events.

3 Avionics bay access hatch protective arm

Mechanics need to have easy access to the avionics bay from the cockpit, sometimes with electronics equipment, thus it was necessary to develop a “protection” that doesn’t interfere with the mechanics work area. This “protection” had to be easily retrofittable, act as a visual attention getter to warn those who don’t realize the “hole” in front of them and provide enough physical resistance to somebody stepping back against it. However, its intent is not to act as a solid barrier to prevent somebody from falling. The best compromise found by Airbus engineers is a protective arm that is attached to the hatch and unfolded when the hatch is open (see fig 3 & 4).

The following SBs are available to retrofit an avionics compartment access hatch with a protective arm on the different aircraft series.
A330–200/-300: SB 25-3356
A340-200/-300: SB 25-4292
A340-500/-600: SB 25-5146
The estimated installation time of the SB is 3 hours.

The same modification is available as an option for production a/c.
Safety First is published by the Flight Safety Department of Airbus. It is a source of specialist safety information for the restricted use of flight and ground crew members who fly and maintain Airbus aircraft. It is also distributed to other selected organisations.

Material for publication is obtained from multiple sources and includes selected information from the Airbus Flight Safety Confidential Reporting System, incident and accident investigation reports, system tests and flight tests. Material is also obtained from sources within the airline industry, studies and reports from government agencies and other aviation sources.

All articles in Safety First are presented for information only and are not intended to replace ICAO guidelines, standards or recommended practices, operator-mandated requirements or technical orders. The contents do not supersede any requirements mandated by the State of Registry of the Operator's aircraft or supersede or amend any Airbus type-specific AFM, AMM, FCOM, MEL documentation or any other approved documentation.

Articles may be reprinted without permission, except where copyright source is indicated, but with acknowledgement to Airbus. Where Airbus is not the author, the contents of the article do not necessarily reflect the views of Airbus, neither do they indicate Company policy.

Contributions, comment and feedback are welcome. For technical reasons the editors may be required to make editorial changes to manuscripts, however every effort will be made to preserve the intended meaning of the original. Enquiries related to this publication should be addressed to:

Airbus
Product Safety department (GS)
1, rond point Maurice Bellonte
31707 Blagnac Cedex - France
Fax: +33(0)5 61 93 44 29
safetycommunication@airbus.com

© Airbus S.A.S. 2008 – All rights reserved. Confidential and proprietary documents.

By taking delivery of this Brochure (hereafter "Brochure"), you accept on behalf of your company to comply with the following guidelines:

► No other intellectual property rights are granted by the delivery of this Brochure than the right to read it, for the sole purpose of information.
► This Brochure and its content shall not be modified and its illustrations and photos shall not be reproduced without prior written consent of Airbus.
► This Brochure and the materials it contains shall not, in whole or in part, be sold, rented, or licensed to any third party subject to payment.

This Brochure contains sensitive information that is correct at the time of going to press. This information involves a number of factors that could change over time, affecting the true public representation. Airbus assumes no obligation to update any information contained in this document or with respect to the information described herein.

Airbus SAS shall assume no liability for any damage in connection with the use of this Brochure and of the materials it contains, even if Airbus SAS has been advised of the likelihood of such damages.