VIRGIN FLIGHT RETURNS TO HEATHROW AFTER PILOT DAZZLED BY LASER

News / Airlines

Plane was a few minutes into flight to New York when it reported a medical issue and asked for permission to return before landing safely.

A Virgin Atlantic flight was forced to return to Heathrow on Sunday night after its first officer reported being dazzled by a laser outside London.

The Airbus A340 was a few minutes into its journey to New York's JFK airport when it reported the incident.

However it continued on across Ireland before deciding to return.

A recording of one of the pilots of flight VS025 requesting permission to return was published online.

He used the code "pan, pan, pan" to alert air traffic control to an onboard emergency that does not pose a threat to life.

“We have a medical issue with one of the pilots after a laser incident after take off and we are

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going to return to Heathrow," says the pilot.

The air traffic controller confirms the route and then returns to the radio to ask for more details of the incident.

"It was around about six or seven miles west of London," says the pilot.

A spokeswoman for Virgin Atlantic said the flight landed safely and the airline was now working with the authorities to identify the source of the laser.

"The VS025 travelling from London Heathrow to New York JFK flight has returned to Heathrow as a precautionary measure due to a laser beam incident," she said.

"The safety of our crew and customers is our top priority and we apologise for any inconvenience to those onboard. All customers will be offered overnight accommodation and we will get them on their journey as soon as possible."

A message on the airline's flight status website added: "Following this incident the first officer reported feeling unwell. The decision was taken by both pilots to return to Heathrow rather than continue the transatlantic crossing."

Hundreds of similar attacks have been reported in recent years withpilots saying they have been left with sore eyes and blurred vision.

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