



ICAO EIGHTH MEETING OF THE ASIA PACIFIC ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION GROUP (APAC-AIG/8)

(Wednesday, 21 October 2020 on Virtual Platform)

Agenda Item 7: Other Business

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

(Presented by France)

SUMMARY

The WP addresses how the accident investigation authority (AIA) continued to fulfil its responsibilities as prescribed in Annex 13 during the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Action by the APAC-AIG is in paragraph 2.1.1.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The WP will focus on the safety measures taken by the BEA to conduct accident investigations and those related to the actions taken when involved in investigations as the State of Manufacture accredited representative.

2. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

2.1 The COVID pandemic has caused global social and economic disruption, and in particular, the pandemic has had a significant impact on the aviation industry due to travel restrictions. In addition, many countries and regions imposed quarantines, entry bans, or other restrictions for all travellers.

2.2 Nevertheless, the Accident Investigation Authorities (AIA) have to fulfill their Annex 13 obligations to investigate accidents and incidents. Commercial Air Transport accident and incident investigations are usually more complex with the participation of all the States concerned by the Annex 13 safety investigation as accredited representatives. This complexity is made greater by having to cope with the constraints related to the COVID pandemic.

2.3 Two of the BEA's major activities during the COVID pandemic will be described in this WP. The first one is the participation of the BEA as state of manufacture in major accident investigations. The second is the BEA's regular activities with respect to domestic GA accident investigations.

2.4 Regarding the fulfillment of the role of Accredited Representative for a major CAT accident abroad, the main issues described in this WP are the launch of a go-team abroad in the hours following the accident and the precautions taken in the BEA laboratories for the flight recorder read-outs.

2.5 Following the accident to the Airbus A320 AP-BLD PIA on 22 May 2020 at Karachi, through advance preparation (COVID test and results in less than 72 hours), coordination (State of occurrence, French ministries and Airbus) and support (Airbus), the BEA successfully sent a go-team to Karachi. The go-team was composed of BEA safety investigators and its adviser from Airbus. Thanks to the standard protection for each investigator (FFP3 masks, gloves and glasses) no further protection was needed on site to protect safety investigators in a COVID environment. The coordination (State of occurrence, French ministries and Airbus), support (Airbus) and compliance with barrier measures made the read-out of the flight recorders possible in the BEA laboratories.

2.6 In France, there was a strict lockdown from 17 March to 11 May. General Aviation leisure flights were forbidden during the period. Following this period (11 May – 30 September), the BEA launched 74 safety investigations following accidents, mainly in GA. Again, thanks to the standard protection for each investigator (FFP3 masks, gloves and glasses) on site and surgical masks when travelling in the team car, no further protection was needed to protect safety investigators in a COVID-19 environment.

2.7 In conclusion, advance preparation and coordination with all the States involved in a major CAT accident, combined with the standard protection on site and compliance with barrier measures during the flight recorder readouts make safety investigations possible during the COVID pandemic period.

3. ACTION BY THE APAC-AIG

3.1 The APAC-AIG is invited to note the BEA methods to conduct safety investigations and to fulfill its State of Manufacture role during restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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