



ICAO

TENTH MEETING OF THE REGIONAL AVIATION SAFETY GROUP - ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL (RASG-APAC/10)

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RASG-APAC/10-IP/3

Agenda Item 5

Agenda Item 5: ICAO / Member State / Industry Presentations

MANAGING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON AVIATION SAFETY WHILE SUPPORTING RECOVERY EFFORTS

(Presented by the United States of America)

SUMMARY

This paper shares information with the global aviation safety community about the actions taken by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to mitigate the safety impact to aircraft airworthiness and related elements resulting from the ongoing global health emergency, facilitate interim tactical support operations, and set a path to recovery. The FAA welcomes collaboration to identify potential impacts to continued airworthiness and system safety.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The COVID-19 global health emergency has caused a significant reduction of commercial aircraft operations resulting in thousands of aircraft placed in storage while others have been repurposed for cargo and other support operations. This impact has extended to civil aviation authorities (CAAs) required to carry out mandatory safety oversight functions while practicing safe distancing and other safety protocols to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2. Furthermore, as recovery efforts are underway, operators are employing mitigation initiatives which may have unintended safety consequences.

1.2 The FAA continues to provide expertise to ICAO forums and organized groups of member States, airlines, airports, and aviation associations to share its strategies to minimize the impacts of COVID-19.

1.3 Simultaneously, in the United States, the FAA is working with U.S. Government partners to prepare version 1.1 of the Runway to Recovery, a document that supports U.S. implementation of the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce Take-Off guidance.

1.4 The FAA seeks to collaborate with aviation authorities and aviation safety stakeholders globally by sharing initiatives and ongoing efforts to manage and mitigate the safety impacts of COVID-19 across the airworthiness lifecycle including, certification, operations, maintenance, flight crew currency, and recovery. The FAA recognizes that dialogue and collaboration may be beneficial to identifying new areas related to the impact of COVID-19 on aviation safety, for further exploration.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 In 2019, the FAA established a Continued Operational Safety (COS) Forum with CAAs in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region. This Forum was established as a result of discussions between the FAA and its APAC authority partners seeking to expand COS engagement and collaboration for more

timely sharing of safety information and aligned safety outcomes. This group of safety experts from over 14 CAAs meets quarterly to review safety information and discuss safety actions. Earlier this year, the Forum added COVID-19 safety impact as a standing agenda item. This collaboration has promoted the sharing and common understanding of diverse safety impacts as a result of this health emergency.

2.2 The aviation safety impact of the current global health emergency is diverse, but this paper focuses specifically on aircraft airworthiness and related elements of the aviation safety system, which are the main focus areas for the COS Forum. The FAA has taken the following actions that may be of interest to the international aviation community:

2.2.1 With regard to mandatory safety oversight activities, the FAA published guidance for use of remote technology during the performance of inspections and tests (reference FAA Policy No. PS-AIR-21-1901). This policy was designed to apply to certification and manufacturing inspections and tests but may have wider application in other areas. The Meeting is invited to refer to WP-19 for more information about the FAA's remote performance of certain certification and regulatory oversight activities.

2.2.2 With regard to safety personnel the FAA issued Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) 118. Persons continue to have difficulty complying with several of the FAA's requirements because of the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 global health emergency, including the continuation of social distancing guidelines to prevent transmission of the virus. As a result, a limited relaxation of usual qualification requirements were provided those who had difficulty complying with usual requirements, which affect readiness of safety personnel. This SFAR enables the continuity of aviation operations that are critical during the COVID-19 public health emergency and the recovery, including operations that support essential services and flights that support response efforts.

2.2.3 With regard to facilitating special support operations during this period, the FAA granted a partial exemption (FAA Exemption No. 18561) to air operators under Title 14 of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, part 121 to carry cargo on seats installed on the main deck of transport category airplanes, when no passengers are being transported.

2.2.4 With regard to air carriers and crews, the FAA issued Safety Alert for Operators (SAFO) 20009, which provides interim occupational health and safety guidance. Because air travel remains essential, including transportation of personnel and supplies necessary to support COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, it is critical to protect the health and safety of crews while ensuring that essential flight operations can continue. The FAA and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that air carriers and crewmembers take precautions to avoid exposure of crewmembers to SARS-CoV-2, to ensure those persons who took a COVID-19 test for symptoms or exposure and are awaiting a result should not work, and to ensure crewmembers do not work while symptomatic with fever, cough, or shortness of breath, or other symptom of COVID-19, or after having tested positive for SARS-CoV-2.

2.2.5 With regard to mitigating the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 in aircraft, the FAA has issued Special Airworthiness Information Bulletin NM-20-17, which provides guidelines with respect to disinfecting airplane interiors and raises awareness of potential negative impacts of disinfectants. Aircraft owners and operators may find it necessary to increase the frequency with which they disinfect aircraft interiors and to include additional areas of the aircraft not previously disinfecting. Although disinfection is not directly related to aircraft airworthiness, too frequent or improper application of chemical or non-chemical disinfectants could result in negative impacts. While the FAA does not treat disinfection practices as maintenance, it is advised that aircraft owners and operators should approach the disinfection process similarly to any maintenance or repair action for which improper execution may compromise airworthiness.

2.2.6 With regard to managing scheduled maintenance requirements during this period, the FAA has issued Information for Operators 20005, which notifies operators of temporary changes to FAA policy on the use of short-term escalations to manage scheduled maintenance requirements affected by the COVID-19 public health emergency.

2.3 Interested persons may visit the following FAA websites for additional information on FAA regulatory actions as a result of COVID-19 impact:

2.3.1 https://www.faa.gov/coronavirus/regulatory_updates/#SFAR

2.3.2 <https://fsims.faa.gov/Wdocs/AFS-1%20Memorandums/COVID-19/COVID-19.htm>

2.4 This paper is meant to share information about actions taken by the FAA related to the management and mitigation of COVID-19 impacts and any subsequent unintended consequences affecting aircraft airworthiness and system safety. The FAA invites collaboration with CAAs and other aviation safety stakeholders to identify additional areas for review. For example, we expect that with the recent encouraging news of COVID-19 vaccine development, we should also anticipate the safety implications of carriage of dry ice to facilitate the transportation of the vaccine.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) Review the management and mitigation actions taken by the FAA to address the safety impacts of the COVID-19 global health emergency; and
- b) Consider engagement with the FAA-APAC COS Forum to share experiences related to safety impacts as a result of COVID-19. For further information on this paper or to join the discussion at the FAA-APAC COS Forum, please 9-AWA-AVS-AIR400@faa.gov.

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