



ICAO

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The Fifth Meeting of the Asia/Pacific
Aerodrome Assistance Working Group (AP-AA/WG/5)

Maldives, 13 to 16 March 2023

Agenda Item 9: Any Other Business

SEAPLANES OPERATIONS IN THE MALDIVES

(Presented by Maldives)

SUMMARY

This paper presents Seaplane Operations in the Maldives highlighting the developments that have been taken place at VIA water aerodrome since its commencement of operation. This paper also discusses the Maldives CAA requirements for licensing and certification of Water Aerodromes in the Maldives.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Maldives is a chain of islands situated in the Indian Ocean, roughly 250 miles southwest of India. Strung across the Indian Ocean in a double chain of 26 coral atolls, the archipelago stretches over 600 miles north to south. With its 1,192 islands forming just 1% of its total area of 35,000 square miles, it is one of the most geographically dispersed countries in the world.

1.2 The majority of the islands are uninhabited; only 192 islands have local populations living on them. 109 islands are tourist resorts and some of the other islands are used for different industrial and commercial purposes. In total the population stands at above 360,000, with one-third of the population living in the capital city, Male'.

1.3 The seaplane operation started in 1993 with the first flight taking off from the lagoon on the eastern side of the airport. Since then, the seaplane operation has expanded rapidly keeping pace with the growth in tourist arrivals and the number of new resorts that have been opened with the new found freedom of seaplane transfers for their guests.

1.4 Up to date there are over 60 seaplanes in operation. In terms of movements, there are an average of 400 movements daily with 3 different seaplane operators, the main operator being Trans Maldivian airways.

2. DISCUSSION

Infrastructure development

2.1 VIA's Water aerodrome Infrastructure has been redesigned and constructed to accommodate the expansion. New seaplane docks have been constructed to facilitate the increase in the aircraft fleet, there are more than 60 seaplane docks newly constructed to accommodate the passenger increase with the recent developments at VIA.

2.2 A new seaplane terminal building has been constructed to facilitate 700 pax daily. There are over 40 lounges to facilitate the high-end tourists arriving to the Maldives.

Flight Operations requirements

2.3 The Civil Aviation Authority has made flight Operations regulations more stringent than ICAO requirements for seaplane operators in the Maldives. Although the Twin Otters aircraft can be operated by one pilot, MCAA requires that these flights to be operated by 2 pilots. As per company requirements the commander is required to have an ATPL qualifications with a minimum of 3,000 hrs experience, including 500 hours, which must be on the type equipped with floats. Cabin crews are required for operations with more than nine passengers.

2.4 Because of the unique operating environment, all foreign pilots are required to attend flight training at ground school and for a captain to sit with them during flights until they have finished their Maldivian flight training, even if they are already a captain in their own country.

Air Traffic Control Requirements

2.5 Male' control zone is classified as class D airspace where all flights are provided with air traffic control service. VFR traffic receives traffic information in respect of all flights.

2.6 Seaplanes are operated as VFR and restricted to day operations only as night VFR is prohibited in Male' airspace. All aircraft IFR and VFR entering/exiting Male' airspace are required to be equipped with surveillance equipment ADS –B and a mode C transponder.

2.7 Standard VFR arrival and Standard VFR departure routes are designed to segregate IFR and VFR flights to address the increasing traffic movement in Male' control zone.

2.8 Airspace is sectorized with different frequencies to address frequency congestion issues.

VIA Water runways

2.9 VIA Water runway consists of 3 water runways and one emergency runway to cater for westerly monsoon when the crosswind component gets high.

2.10 Marker buoys are used to indicate the threshold and ends of runways. Taxiways are also marked using different colour buoys.

MCAA regulations

2.11 MCAA regulations governing the seaplane operation are as follows.

1. **MCAR 138-A** Water Aerodromes Rules
2. **MCAR 138-B** Water Aerodromes Standards
3. **MCAR 138-C** Procedures and Requirements for Floating Platform License

2.12 There are 2 different types of landing sites in the Maldives. Landing sites co-located with land aerodromes and landing sites located in the lagoon.

2.13 As per **MCAR 138-A**, seaplane landing areas are required to be certified when:

- a) The water aerodrome is co-located with a land aerodrome with an established Control Zone;

- b) The water aerodrome exceeds 100,000 movements annually; and
- c) The CAA finds it necessary to certify the water aerodrome.

2.14 All other remote landing sites in the lagoon served by floating platforms are required to be licensed. Procedures and Requirements for Floating Platform Licenses are specified in MCAR – 138 –C.

2.15 The floating platforms are either attached to a resort jetty or anchored to the bottom of the sea. Location of floating platforms is determined based on a number of factors including depth of the seabed, distance of the water aerodrome from the servicing resorts and islands, maritime movements in the location and navigable airspace. The effect on the surrounding community and the environmental impact of the platform is also considered before approval is granted.

2.16 Floating platforms must provide adequate support and buoyancy for the loads imposed by embarking and disembarking passengers and their luggage. They also must include safety equipment as required by MCAA regulations.

2.17 Each licensed water aerodrome operator is to have an emergency response plan. All personnel involved in rescue and firefighting duties must receive appropriate regular training in the use of the equipment provided. The medical equipment commensurate with the category of aircraft in operation must always be readily available.

MCAA's oversight requirement

2.18 All certified landing sites are required to be inspected/audited as per the MCAR138 (Aerodrome rules).

2.19 As of now, there are a total of 3 landing sites that are qualified as water aerodromes. And over 90 landing sites that fall under licensing category and are licensed as per the CAA requirements.

2.20 Water aerodromes audits and inspections are conducted by MCAA Inspectors annually.

2.21 Remote landing sites are required to be inspected by the operator under their Safety Management system and inspection/audit reports should be submitted to CAA.

2.22 CAA inspectors will visit the site once every 3 years.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

2.1 The meeting is invited to note the information contained in this paper.

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