



International Civil Aviation Organization  
Asia and Pacific Office

ICAO

**Eleventh Meeting of the Asia Pacific Accident Investigation Group (APAC-AIG/11)**

*(Singapore, 16 – 17 August 2023)*

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**Agenda Item 4: Enhancing Accident Investigation Capabilities**

**ECAC GROUP OF EXPERTS IN AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT AND  
INCIDENT INVESTIGATION WORKSHOP ON THE HARMONIZING  
ON TREATMENT OF SERIOUS INCIDENTS**

*(Presented by Singapore)*

**SUMMARY**

The paper provides information of the ECAC ACC Workshop on Harmonising the Treatment of Serious Incidents on 25 April 2023 in Bratislava, Slovakia.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 ICAO has a fairly clear definition of accident in Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation. As for serious incident, Annex 13 says that it is an occurrence involving circumstances indicating that there was a high probability of an accident. How high a probability had to be before an incident could be considered a serious incident? This had always been a challenge for the accident investigation authorities (AIAs) to gauge such a probability. The Group of Experts in Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation of the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC ACC) organised a workshop on Treatment of Incidents in Roskilde, Denmark, on 15-16 May 2012 to discuss the challenges in determining whether an incident should be classified as a serious incident or not.

1.2 In the twelfth Edition of Annex 13 published in 2020, a new guidance was introduced in Attachment C for determining whether an occurrence should be classified as a serious incident. The guidance suggests the use of an event risk-based analysis tool, taking into consideration the most credible scenario had the incident escalated and the effectiveness of the remaining defences between the incident and the potential accident. With this background, ECAC ACC organised a workshop on Harmonising the Treatment of Serious Incident in Bratislava, Slovakia, on 25 April 2023 to follow up on the 2012 workshop.

**2. DISCUSSION**

2.1 This 2023 workshop aimed to share the approach and experience of investigation authorities and perspectives from stakeholders in the classification of incidents with group discussions of case studies. Nine presentations were made, including the following:

- Sharing by AIAs on their perspective and approach to the treatment of serious incident by:

- BEA France
  - AIB Denmark
  - SIB Estonia
  - TSIB Singapore
- Sharing of perspective on the identification and investigation of serious incident by
    - AirExplore, a Slovak charter airline operator
    - ATR, an aircraft manufacturer
    - EASA

2.2 Key takeaways from these presentations:

2.2.1 Investigation of serious incident yields valuable safety lessons since the aircraft, crew and evidence are still available as opposed to an accident, and there is usually less pressure than an accident. However, some challenges faced by AIAs are:

- The lack of uniform and consistent way of assessing occurrence may result in different classifications by different investigators.
- They have difficulty in deciding on the classification of an occurrence because the initial occurrence notification to them provide them with only limited information.
- They do not have legislative power to request for more information if an investigation is not instituted.
- While waiting for more information before deciding on the classification, they run the risk of delaying the instituting of an investigation and the securing of perishable evidence.

Apart from the guidance in Attachment C to Annex 13, other guidance tools used for classification were the European Risk Classification Scheme (ERCS), ECCAIRS and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

2.2.2 EASA presented on the ERCS, which aims to:

- support the AIAs of the EU States in their assessment and classification of occurrence in a harmonised manner based on the level of risk posed by each occurrence to aviation safety;
- identify rapid actions needed to address high-risk occurrences; and
- facilitate an integrated and harmonised approach to risk management across the European aviation system and therefore enabling the AIAs and EASA to focus on safety improvement efforts in a harmonised manner.

2.3 The workshop included group discussions on eight case studies on incident classification basing on actual events in the EU States. Most discussion groups arrived at the same classification in most cases while there were differing views for cases that needed more information.

2.4 The workshop ended with a discussion on the various tools available to aid event classification and the next step in harmonising ECAC ACC member's classification and treatment of serious incidents. These and other learning points from the workshop would be detailed in the workshop report and made available in due course on the ECAC website sharing the learning points from this workshop.

**3. ACTION BY THE MEETING**

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) appreciate the importance of classifying occurrences in a consistent manner, so that events that are serious in nature will be adequately classified and resources adequately allocated, with a view to enabling fruitful investigations and learning of valuable safety lessons;
- b) promote the use among States in the APAC region of the event risk-based classification guidance tool provided in Attachment C to Annex 13 to achieve consistent classification of occurrences; and
- c) encourage States in the APAC region to emulate the ECAC ACC's effort in harmonising the treatment of serious incidents by organising future workshops to promote the treatment of serious incident through sharing of their experiences and perspective in the handling of serious incidents.

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