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*International Civil Aviation Organization***The Seventh Meeting of the Asia/Pacific
Aerodrome Assistance Working Group (AP-AA/WG/7)***Bangkok, Thailand, 27 to 30 May 2025*

Agenda Item 8: AP-AA/WG Task List**PRACTICES, EXPERIENCE AND CHALLENGES FOR THE SAFETY OVERSIGHT OF
GROUND HANDLING SERVICES IN MALAYSIA**

(Presented by Malaysia)

SUMMARY

Ground handling services are essential to ensuring the safety and efficiency of air transport operations. In Malaysia, the regulatory oversight of ground handling service providers (GHSPs) is jointly managed by the Malaysian Aviation Commission (MAVCOM) which oversees certification and the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia (CAAM) which conducts safety audits and compliance inspections. This working paper shares the procedures practiced by inspectors, the experiences gained from overseeing ground handling operations and the challenges encountered.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ground handling services play a critical role in ensuring the safe, efficient and smooth operation of air transport. In Malaysia, the oversight of GHSPs is conducted by multiple agencies, primarily MAVCOM and CAAM. MAVCOM is responsible for the certification of GHSPs which focuses on the economic aspect, while CAAM conducts safety audits and regulatory technical compliance inspections.

1.2 Currently, there are multiple GHSPs operate in Malaysia covering various services such as baggage handling, aircraft servicing, catering, ramp operations, fuel supply and passenger assistance. The diverse nature of ground handling services mandates stringent oversight to ensure compliance with safety and operational regulations.

1.3 The oversight audit is conducted in accordance with ICAO Doc 10121 – Manual of Ground Handling and the Civil Aviation Directive (CAD) 6010 – Ground Handling to evaluate the compliance of GHSPs with regulatory requirements. This process ensures that operational procedures and personnel qualifications align with established aviation safety standards. Ultimately, it aims to enhance the capabilities of GHSPs in fostering a higher level of safety and regulatory adherence in ground handling operations.

2. DISCUSSION

Inspection Practices

2.1 During the conduct of safety oversight, inspectors are granted unrestricted access to perform audits and compliance assessments which allowing them to evaluate ground handling operations effectively. These includes all-access airport passes which enabling seamless movement across operational areas. Moreover, unrestricted access is crucial as inspectors often encounter dynamic and high-risk environments where immediate and thorough assessments are necessary. In doing so, inspectors are able to observe real-time operations and identify potential safety hazards.

2.2 Prior to conducting safety oversight activities, inspectors will notify GHSPs depending on whether the audit is planned or unplanned. Planned audits provide GHSPs with the opportunity to prepare by ensuring the availability of necessary documentation and personnel while also facilitating a structured evaluation process. In contrast, unplanned audits are conducted to assess real-time operational compliance particularly in areas such as vehicle transportation. This approach reinforces continuous regulatory compliance and prevent GHSPs from focusing solely on meeting standards during scheduled inspections.

2.3 Furthermore, the presence of the Nominated Post Holder (NPH) from the GHSP is mandatory during the safety oversight process. The NPH plays a critical role in ensuring compliance by providing the required documentation, granting access to relevant operational areas and addressing inquiries from inspectors. Their involvement is fundamental in upholding accountability throughout the audit process.

2.4 In addition, all findings and observations from inspections are systematically documented in the Compliance Questionnaire (CQ) checklist. This serves as a structured assessment tool for evaluating compliance levels in identifying areas of concern and recommending corrective measures. An official audit report will be issued to the GHSP upon the conclusion of the audit where it identifies any instances of non-compliance and outlining the corresponding corrective actions together with follow-up procedures to achieve full compliance. The report functions as a formal record, providing GHSPs with clear guidance on implementing safety improvements in achieving full compliance with regulatory requirements.

Field Experiences

2.5 Through safety oversight, inspectors have observed that GHSPs often lack familiarity with regulatory requirements, particularly in CAD 6010 – Ground Handling. To address this, inspectors incorporate regulatory guidance into audits by actively engaging with GHSP personnel to clarify compliance requirements, share best practices and recommends corrective actions. This proactive approach has then improved compliance and strengthened safety culture while enhancing alignment with aviation safety regulations in emphasizing the value of continuous oversight and collaboration.

2.6 Likewise, inspectors observed varying levels of personnel competency within GHSPs, highlighting the need for continuous training improvements. A crucial approach is early identification of training gaps which allows inspectors to recommend targeted corrective measures such as refresher courses, competency assessments or revised training programs. By emphasizing structured training initiatives, inspectors have enhanced workforce proficiency which leads to safer and more efficient ground handling operations.

2.7 Through experience, inspectors identified inconsistencies in GHSP documentation and record-keeping, including variations in manuals, safety checklists, maintenance logs and competency records. These discrepancies create compliance gaps and affect operational consistency. To address this, inspectors collaborate with GHSPs to revise manuals, refine procedures, and implement verification measures, ensuring documentation aligns with regulations and actual practice

Oversight Challenges

2.8 Despite the implementation of established oversight practices, inspectors face multiple challenges in enforcing regulatory compliance effectively. One of the primary challenges is the limitation of resources, particularly in the availability of qualified expert inspectors across all categories of ground handling, which comprises:

- Category 1 - Ground administration and supervision.
- Category 2 - Passenger handling.
- Category 3 - Freight and mail handling, (Landside).
- Category 4 - Aircraft services.
- Category 5 - Aircraft maintenance.
- Category 6 - Flight operations and crew administration.
- Category 7 - Surface transport.
- Category 8 - Catering services.
- Category 9 - Baggage handling.
- Category 10 - Freight and mail handling, (Airside).
- Category 11 - Ramp handling.
- Category 12 - Fuel and oil handling.

The complexity of ground handling operations requires specialized knowledge which is not always readily available within the existing pool of inspectors.

2.9 One common challenge encountered is that NPHs are not well-versed in the audit process and the CQ checklist which causes delays and difficulties during compliance verification. In addition, the absence of direct enforcement mechanisms poses another significant challenge. Thus, inspectors do not have the authority to impose penalties for non-compliance which limits their ability to take immediate corrective action against GHSPs that fail to meet regulatory requirements.

2.10 Lastly, safety oversight mandates coordination with various stakeholders which includes aerodrome operators, airlines and other regulatory bodies. This multi-stakeholder environment presents logistical and administrative challenges particularly in ensuring a consistent approach to ground handling safety compliance across different airports.

Conclusion

2.11 The safety oversight of ground handling services in Malaysia is essential for maintaining high aviation safety standards. While CAAM has established robust audit and inspection practices, several challenges persist which includes resource limitations, enforcement constraints and coordination complexities. Addressing these challenges requires increased training for GHSP personnel and improved inter-agency collaboration to strengthen compliance with ground handling safety standard.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) note the information contained in this paper;
- b) share relevant challenges and experience by other States in the Asia-Pacific Region;
- c) share relevant best practices in dealing with ground handling service providers; and
- d) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.

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