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Agenda Item 4: Asia/Pacific and Inter-regional SAR Planning, Coordination and Cooperation

INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE PROPER REGISTRATION OF 406 MHZ ELT

(Presented by Japan)

SUMMARY

This paper presents the awareness-raising and outreach initiatives implemented by the Japan Civil Aviation Bureau to promote the proper registration of 406 MHz Emergency Locator Transmitters (ELTs) and the timely updating of associated registration information.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Tokyo Rescue Coordination Center (Tokyo RCC) establishes, maintains, and manages a database containing aircraft identification and emergency contact information associated with registered 406 MHz ELTs. This database is utilized to support timely and effective search and rescue (SAR) operations in the event of aircraft distress. The operational practices of Tokyo RCC provide a practical example of the effective use of 406 MHz ELTs in SAR activities.

1.2 Upon receipt of a distress beacon transmitted by a 406 MHz ELT, Tokyo RCC refers to the registration database to confirm aircraft identification and relevant contact information, and to collect additional information regarding the situation of the aircraft concerned. By ensuring registration data is complete, accurate, and up to date, the time required to identify an aircraft in distress can be significantly reduced, thereby facilitating a prompt and efficient SAR response.

2. DISCUSSION

Current Status and Issues

2.1 Distress beacons generated by 406 MHz ELTs enable rapid localization and identification of aircraft in distress. However, the effectiveness of such beacons is highly dependent upon the registration of ELTs in the relevant database and the accuracy of the associated registration information. In Japan, instances of unregistered ELTs and incomplete or outdated registration information have been identified, which may adversely affect the timely identification of aircraft following receipt of a distress beacon.

2.2 In addition to initial ELT installation, updates to registration information are required when an ELT is removed, when there is a change in aircraft operator, or when emergency contact details are modified. It is therefore essential that aircraft operators fully recognize the importance of ELT registration and the continuous maintenance of accurate registration data.

2.3 In small aircraft distress occurrences within the past year, information derived from 406 MHz ELT distress beacons enabled early awareness of the situation and contributed significantly to the prompt initiation of search operations. Conversely, in cases where ELTs were not registered or registration data had not been updated, aircraft identification required additional time, resulting in a potential delay in the initial SAR response and a reduced realization of the operational benefits of 406 MHz ELTs.

Initiatives

2.4 To promote both registration of 406 MHz ELTs and the appropriate updating of registration information, the following initiatives have been implemented:

- a) Safe Operation Seminars: the main participants were air transport operators, small aircraft operators, private pilots, and government agencies operating aircraft. Seminars were held at six locations nationwide. The Tokyo RCC provided briefings on the overview of SAR operations, the importance of information transmitted by ELTs, and ELT registration forms and submission procedures;
- b) Information Leaflets: information leaflets aimed at promoting ELT registration were developed and distributed to seminar participants and made available on the authority's official website; and
- c) E-mail Newsletter: in coordination with the regulatory division of the Japan Civil Aviation Bureau responsible for safety oversight, information regarding ELT registration and updating procedures was disseminated through an established safety promotion email newsletter targeting small aircraft pilots.

2.5 In addition, the importance of ELT registration and verification of registration information is communicated through meetings and other opportunities involving airlines and aircraft operator organizations. These initiatives can be implemented without requiring regulatory amendments.

Effects

2.6 As a result of these initiatives, the number of ELT registrations recorded during the period from October 2025 to March 2026 increased by 49% compared to the preceding six-month period.

2.7 Inquiries related to confirmation and updating of registration information have also increased, and Tokyo RCC is conducting appropriate verification against the registration database.

2.8 While these initiatives have contributed to an improved level of awareness among aircraft operators regarding the importance of accurate 406 MHz ELT registration information, continued efforts are necessary to further enhance registration compliance and data quality.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

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

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