DGP-WG/04-WP/32
2/9/04

DANGEROUS GOODS PANEL (DGP)

MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP OF THE WHOLE

Abu Dhabi, 4 to 8 October 2004

Agenda Item 5: Discussion of miscellaneous dangerous goods issues

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

(Presented by the Secretary)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Annex 13, paragraph 3.1, states that the sole objective of the investigation of an accident or incident shall be the prevention of accidents and incidents. Accordingly, safety recommendations which are developed as the result of the investigation of such occurrences, are important safety tools.

1.2 The subject of dangerous air cargo was addressed by the UK Air Accidents Investigation Branch following their investigation of a Boeing 747 accident near Stansted Airport on 22 December 1999, is presented below. An extract from the report on the accident, containing two safety recommendations on the subject of dangerous air cargo (2003-65, 2003-66).

1.2.1 Dangerous Air Cargo

ICAO Technical Instructions (Part 7 of the 2003-2004 edition Doc 9284) put the onus on the aircraft operator to inform the State in which an aircraft accident has occurred of the dangerous goods carried, together with supplementary information, as soon as possible. However, the instructions do not define an addressee. The timely availability of information on DAC is an essential element in the accident site risk analysis, which has to be conducted by the agencies responding to the accident. The emergency services, particularly the fire services, will almost be confronted with responding before detailed information on the cargo contents is available. They are therefore forced to make certain assumptions and to consider the worst case scenario. They are familiar with the hazards of burning aircraft, equip themselves accordingly and have limited exposure. The accident investigators and other supporting agencies could be exposed to the accident site for some days and the aircraft wreckage for some weeks or months. It is therefore appropriate for the information on DAC to be directed to the accident investigation authority of the state of occurrence.

It is recommended that:

> ICAO Technical Instructions Part 7, Chapter 4.6.1 be amended to, "The operator of an aircraft carrying dangerous goods which is involved in an aircraft accident must, as soon as possible, inform the appropriate Authority in the State in which the aircraft accident occurred of the dangerous goods carried together with their proper shipping names, class and subsidiary risks for which labels are required, the compatibility group for Class 1 and the quantity and location on board the aircraft". (Safety Recommendation No 2003-65).

In this case, as the aircraft crashed close to the point of departure, the information on DAC was quickly available from the cargo handling company and the material type and volume was such that it was rendered benign by the impact.

In addition to the declared dangerous goods, there was other hazardous material in the cargo which did not fall into the category classified as dangerous goods and therefore required no specific dangerous goods packing or marking. This was a consignment of medical diagnostic kits containing small phials of "Iodine 125" classified as "Radioactive - Excepted Package". Information on this material was not identified for several days because of the large volume and variety of paperwork associated with the cargo load. Although it was eventually established that the volume and nature of the material involved did not constitute a significant health threat its presence, detected before its nature was established, resulted in the site being evacuated and fuelled local concerns.

Given the difficulties associated with the timely transfer of information on DAC and the presentation of information on other cargo, the manifests being from a paper based system it is proposed that review take place of the methods employed to track airborne cargo.

It is recommended that:

> ICAO consider an initiative to review the current methods of tracking air cargo and further consider improved systems, utilising electronic data storage and transmission, with a view to providing timely information on the cargo carried by any aircraft involved in an accident. (Safety Recommendation No 2003-66).

2. PROPOSAL

2.1 The working group is requested to confirm that 7;4.6.1 adequately addresses Safety Recommendation No. 2003-65.

2.2 The working group is requested to consider Safety Recommendation No. 2003-66 and to decide what action, if any, should be taken.

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