



International Civil Aviation Organization

**Third Meeting of the Asia Pacific Accident Investigation Group
(APAC – AIG/3)**

(Colombo, Sri Lanka, 23 - 24 June 2015)

Agenda Item 6: Regional cooperation

**REPORT OF THE 2014 INTERNATIONAL CONFIDENTIAL
AVIATION SAFETY SYSTEMS (ICASS) GROUP MEETING**

(Presented by Australia)

SUMMARY

A voluntary and confidential incident reporting scheme is an essential component of a mature aviation safety system that complements a State/Administration's mandatory reporting scheme.

The International Confidential Aviation Safety Systems (ICASS) Group promotes confidential reporting systems as an effective method of enhancing flight safety in commercial air transport and general aviation operations. The 2014 ICASS meeting was hosted by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) in Canberra from 4-6 November 2014. Twenty countries attended, including 15 from the Asia Pacific region.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The importance of voluntary confidential reporting system

1.1.1 A voluntary confidential reporting scheme is an essential part of a mature aviation safety system. It supplements, though of course does not replace, a comprehensive and well administered mandatory accident and incident reporting scheme. It also complements other forms of gathering information about hazards and risks, such as audit and surveillance by the regulator.

1.1.2 ICAO Annex 19, Safety Management, Chapter 5 paragraph 5.1.2, states that contracting States shall establish a voluntary incident reporting system to facilitate the collection of information that may not be captured by a mandatory incident reporting system. Paragraph 5.3.1 states that a voluntary incident reporting system shall be non-punitive and afford protection to the sources of information.

1.1.3 A voluntary confidential reporting scheme can provide safety information that would otherwise not be available, and can allow early identification of aviation safety problems and trends, leading to corrective action by operators and the regulator. It is widely recognised that a focus on the human factors associated with aircraft accidents and incidents is needed to further improve aviation safety, and a voluntary confidential reporting scheme can be an important part of that approach. Such a scheme is an effective way to collect data about the threats and errors of everyday operations. If a pilot reports a 'near miss' and recounts the lessons they learnt, then that information can be shared with the aviation community to the benefit of all.

1.1.4 The scheme should be available to anyone with an aviation safety concern. The scheme should be administered by an agency other than the State civil aviation regulator. This is because even the perception that the regulator may use the information reported to take action against specific individuals is likely to inhibit the number and comprehensiveness of the reports submitted. Hence, an independent third party should administer the scheme. For example, in Australia, this is the ATSB, and in the USA it is NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

1.1.5 It should be understood that 'confidential' does not mean 'anonymous'. Knowing the reporter's identity, and being able to contact them, allows the agency to clarify and enlarge on the matter that is the focus of the report.

1.1.6 Confidential means that while the reporter's identity is known to the agency to which the report is submitted, their identity will not be passed on to any third party, such as an operator or the regulator. In addition, any details in the report that could lead to the identification of the reporter will be removed before the report is made public or available to a third party.

1.1.7 In States with smaller populations and aviation industries it can be difficult to adequately de-identify the information received to ensure confidentiality. There may only be one operator of a particular aircraft type, and only one individual with a particular role. For this reason confidential reporting is best used to address systemic safety issues rather than take action against individuals.

1.1.8 For a voluntary confidential reporting scheme to be successful the aviation industry must feel that it is a worthwhile endeavour. If the industry perception is that the information provided is not acted on, then it is unlikely that they will continue to submit reports. Hence, some form of publication is needed to make it clear that there is a safety benefit in submitting reports.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The International Confidential Aviation Safety Systems Group

2.1.1 The International Confidential Aviation Safety Systems (ICASS) Group promotes confidential reporting systems as an effective method of enhancing flight safety in commercial air transport and general aviation operations. The principal objectives of the ICASS Group are,

- To provide advice and assistance in the start-up and operation of a confidential reporting system
- To facilitate the exchange of safety related information between independent confidential aviation reporting systems
- To identify solutions to common problems in the operation of such systems

2.1.2 There are currently ICASS Group confidential reporting programs in fourteen States, with South Africa being the newest member to join.

2.1.3 The 2014 International Confidential Aviation Safety Systems Group meeting was hosted by the ATSB in Canberra from 4-6 November 2014. Twenty countries attended, including 15 from the Asia Pacific region,

- Australia
- Bangladesh
- Brazil
- China
- European Aviation Safety Authority

- Indonesia
- Japan
- Korea
- Macau China
- Malaysia
- Nepal
- New Zealand
- Papua New Guinea
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Spain
- Sri Lanka
- Taiwan
- United Kingdom
- United States

2.1.4 The meeting also discussed the feasibility of establishing an APAC regional voluntary and confidential reporting scheme. However, a number of obstacles to implementing a regional scheme were identified, those being,

- Jurisdiction
- Resourcing
- Language

2.2 **An example of safety action taken as a result of a voluntary and confidential report**

2.3 REPCON (Report Confidentially) is Australia's voluntary confidential aviation reporting scheme. REPCON allows any person who has an aviation safety concern to report it to the ATSB in confidence. All personal information regarding any individual - either the reporter or any person referred to in the report - remains strictly confidential, unless permission is given by the subject of the information.

2.3.1 The goals of the REPCON scheme are to increase awareness of safety issues and to encourage safety action by those best placed to respond to safety concerns. The ATSB can use confidential reporting to identify trends in hazards and risks that are relevant to more than just one operator, or that involve interactions between operators and the regulator.

2.3.2 REPCON reports can be submitted via the web or email, or telephone or mail. Submission of a report known by the reporter to be false or misleading is an offence under Australian law.

2.3.3 Information about REPCON reported safety concerns are published on the ATSB website http://www.atsb.gov.au/repcon_reports.aspx?mode=Aviation. The ATSB encourages industry personnel to review these reports to consider whether there are any lessons that can be learnt in their own organisation.

2.3.4 The following example outlines a REPCON report that benefited safety.

2.3.4.1 **Report**

2.3.4.1.1 The reporter expressed a safety concern in relation to the transmission of weather information by the automatic weather station at Dubbo. The reporter advised that while the weather station is still processing the weather information, due to a fault it is not transmitting the information

correctly. The reporter also advised that the weather information is not being received by controllers responsible for relaying hazard alerts to flight crews as the system is set to receive the information automatically and cannot be manually updated.

2.3.4.2 Reporter comment

2.3.4.2.1 This is the scenario that contributed to the incidents at Mildura which are being investigated in ATSB investigation AO-2013-100, where aircraft diverted from Adelaide Airport, due to adverse weather, to Mildura which was also affected by adverse weather conditions. The controller in this case was unaware of the actual weather at Mildura.

2.3.4.3 Safety action taken

2.3.4.3.1 The Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP) made system changes to ensure that the relevant weather information was available to air traffic control in the event of a loss of an automatic broadcast service. This change was documented in air traffic control procedures. The aviation regulator will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the system improvement.

2.3.4.3.2 The ANSP subsequently reported that the system change had been tested and found to be effective.

2.4 The 2015 ICASS meeting will be held in Cologne, Germany, from the 19-23 October. For information, please contact Elaine Hargreaves on Elaine.hargreaves@atsb.gov.au.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to

- a) Note ICAO Annex 19 paragraphs 5.1.2 and 5.3.1 that require States to establish a voluntary incident reporting system and to afford protection to the sources of the information reported.
- b) Note the date and venue of the 2015 ICASS Meeting.

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