

MEDIA STATEMENT

23 DECEMBER 2009

OVERVIEW OF CAUSES OF ACCIDENTS AND SERIOUS INCIDENTS INVOLVING SA AIRLINK OPERATIONS

There is seldom a single cause associated with any accidents and the occurrences involving Airlink operations appear to be no exception to this.

In the case of the FADN (Merebank) accident the initial cause appears to be that of an engine failure during take-off which finally resulted in an accident when the human factor involvement resulted in the wrong engine being shut down. This type of engine failure has occurred previously and the cause is known to the manufacturer. The party that can initiate corrective action is primarily vested in the manufacturer. As far as human factors are concerned, this is a subject that will continue to be addressed through standardization of procedures and training to instill rational decisions being taken.

With regards to the FAPE (Port Elizabeth) runway excursion incident, this resulted from a mechanical failure of the steering mechanism. This is an on condition item, that is, no service life limitation is defined by the manufacturer. This item had been installed in the aircraft for more than 5000 flights until it appears failed to have provided the correct input to the hydraulic steering system. The corrective action which would be appropriate is to inspect the fleet of aircraft to establish if any other aircraft are affected and then to determine if an inspection cycle should be introduced for this item.

With the FAGG (George) accident the aircraft has installed an automatic braking system (ABS) which should optimize braking in wet runway conditions. However, if the runway condition is such that the friction between the tires and the runway surface is insufficient to ensure effective and optimized braking being applied by the ABS an overrun of the runway can result. In this respect both the functioning of the ABS requires review as well as verification of an acceptable level of runway friction under wet conditions.

Aviation is a well regulated and controlled mode of transportation. It is the responsibility of the SACAA to ensure that surveillance is conducted on any Air Operator Certificate (AOC) holders' operations and require corrective action to be taken when necessary. This is normally done through inspections and audits of operators, issuance of Airworthiness Directives and amendment of regulations. Regulations are required to be based on Standards defined by the International Civil Aviation Organization in Annexes and are continuously reviewed and revised. For example Annex 1 has been amended 169 times since its creation in 1950.

-ENDS-

About the SACAA:

The South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) was established on 1 October 1998 following the enactment of the South African Civil Aviation Authority Act, No.40, in September of the same year. The SACAA promotes and maintains a safe, secure and sustainable civil aviation environment, by regulating and overseeing the functioning and development of the industry in an efficient, cost-effective, and customer-friendly manner according to international standards.

For more information contact:

Kabelo Ledwaba
Manager: Communications
South African Civil Aviation Authority
Tel. + 27 11 545 1511
Cell: + 27 83 451 2654
Email: ledwabak@caa.co.za
Website: www.caa.co.za