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Australia Plans Multi-Crew Licensing

A multi-crew pilot license for pilots trained specifically to be first officers in air transport operations is being planned by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) of Australia, which is now developing regulations for the new category license.

“People training for the multi-crew license will focus on large-aircraft flying skills, crew resource management, and threat and error management throughout their year-long training,” CASA said. They will be required to complete 240 hours of training, including up to 70 flight hours.

The new license is intended to address research findings that failures in teamwork are a primary contributor to aviation accidents, in part because traditional training methods emphasize individual skills and independence, CASA said.

CASA said that the new regulations are intended to “keep Australia at the forefront of international changes in air safety, in line with the latest standards issued by the International Civil Aviation Organization.”



NTSB Cautions Pilots About Severe Weather

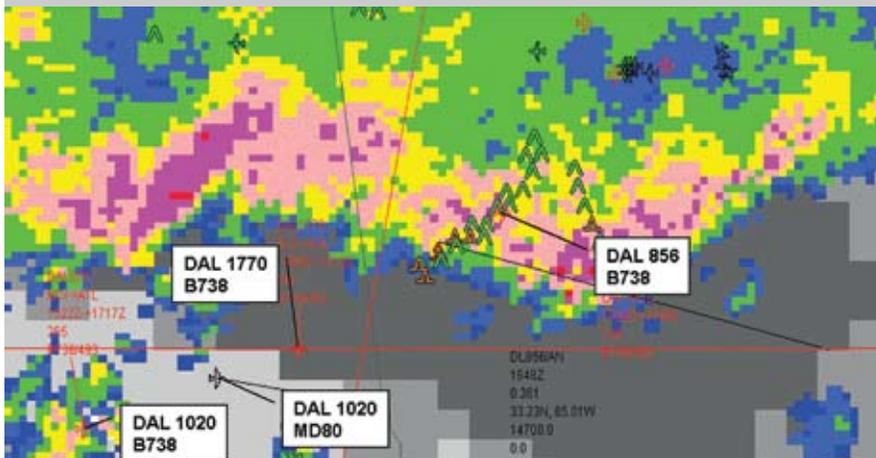
The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), citing several accidents in which severe weather was either a cause or a contributing factor, is urging pilots to “actively maintain awareness of severe weather” during flight.

The accidents cited by NTSB involved aircraft being flown under instrument flight rules (IFR), with pilots in contact with air traffic control (ATC). Although ATC is primarily responsible for keeping IFR aircraft separated, controllers also provide pilots with weather advisories and, at an individual pilot’s request, suggested headings to avoid precipitation — but only when a controller’s workload permits.

“Severe-weather avoidance is the responsibility of the pilots,” NTSB Chairman Mark V. Rosenker said. “We ... feel that it is imperative to reiterate the seriousness of this task during flight.”

NTSB said that its accident investigations found that pilots of the accident aircraft “were either not advised about areas of severe weather ahead or were given incomplete information.” The pilots did not use alternative sources of information — such as weather alerts broadcast by ATC and various on-board weather-avoidance technologies — that probably would have prevented the accidents, NTSB said.

AeroTech Research (USA)



Canada Considers Changes in Emergency Response Plans

Certified Canadian airports would be required to comply with “clear and consistent” criteria in developing and evaluating emergency response plans if regulatory amendments proposed by Transport Canada are adopted.

“Travelers expect to feel safe when they use Canadian airports,” said Lawrence Cannon, minister of transport, infrastructure and communities. “These amendments will ensure that our airports have the necessary tools to successfully respond to an emergency situation.”

The proposed amendments would require a more structured method of handling emergency planning and evaluation of the emergency plans, Transport Canada said.

Emergency plans would be required for various scenarios. The plans would describe how each type of emergency would be handled and would identify airport and community organizations that could provide assistance during an emergency.

The proposals were published Oct. 7, 2006. After a 30-day response period and subsequent review of the responses by Transport Canada, final regulations will be published.

Better SOPs Sought for EMS Flights

Standard operating procedures and crew coordination should receive greater emphasis in emergency medical services (EMS) helicopter operations, the Swedish Accident Investigation Board says.

The board's recommendation follows its investigation of a Sept. 18, 2004, accident in which a Sikorsky S-76C struck the water during an overwater nighttime visual flight rules (VFR) approach to a landing site on a small, relatively undeveloped island. The final report on the accident said that the pilots "underestimated the difficulty" of the landing and that the accident occurred because of "a lack of adequate routines and procedures for the activity in question, and existing procedures were not followed completely."

The board recommended that the Swedish Civil Aviation Authority "act to ensure that operators who fly to places which are not established takeoff and landing grounds possess, and follow, operational procedures for such flights similar to those used for [instrument flight rules] flights" and that it "act to ensure that operators flying under VFR, with two pilots or with [a medical crewmember] develop and follow some form of crew cooperation for VFR flight corresponding to that in use for IFR flights."

The board also recommended that the authority "seek internationally to ensure that requirements for the use of [flight data recorders] and [cockpit voice recorders] are introduced for this category of helicopter operations."

Anxiety Suspected in Pilot Incapacitation

A Boeing 767-300ER pilot who had been taking an antidepressant to treat anxiety and stress may have suffered "an anxiety reaction" during a passenger flight from Auckland, New Zealand, to Melbourne, Australia, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) said in its final report on the incident.

The report said that during cruise, the pilot complained first of increasing fatigue, and later of nausea, headache and neck pain. A cabin crewmember administered oxygen, and the captain was relieved of duty; the first officer flew the airplane to its destination. After landing, the captain was taken to a hospital, where medical tests were inconclusive but ruled out any heart-related problem.

The captain had a "history of stress-related difficulties over several years" and had been treated with stress management and a type of antidepressant medication known as a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI). He also had been treated for high blood pressure, or hypertension.

"It is possible that the incapacitation of the [captain] was related to an anxiety reaction precipitated by a combination of factors, including low blood pressure due to hypertension medication, fatigue and a head cold," the report said.

Unlike many other civil aviation authorities, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) of Australia issues medical certification to some pilots who take SSRIs.

CASA's policy complies with recommendations of the Aerospace Medical Association. A 2005 review concluded that the policy was "appropriate and that there were no safety concerns relating to the practice," the ATSB report said.



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Cold-Weather Reminder

The U.K. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has issued a reminder to all operators about two problems accompanying winter flight operations: contaminated runways and airframe icing.

The Flight Operations Division Communication from the Safety Regulation Group says that operators should avoid using snow- and ice-contaminated runways whenever possible and that flight crews should use the most current information in their performance calculations.

In addition, flight crews should be reminded that using electronic flight bag products in performance calculations on a contaminated runway "often produces optimum flap-setting performance where the computer uses the available runway length to accelerate the airplane to a higher speed in order to improve the climb performance. This is unlikely to be appropriate in such conditions where a shorter ground roll would be preferred."

ATSB Urges More Guidance for ATC

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) has recommended that Airservices Australia review guidance material and training for airport air traffic controllers to ensure that they provide pilots with all relevant traffic information.

The recommendation was issued as a result of an ATSB investigation of an April 30, 2005, incident at Hobart Airport in Tasmania in which separation between a converging Cessna 152 and a Boeing 717-200 was as little as 400 m (1,312 ft) horizontally and 300 ft vertically. Pilots of each aircraft took action to avoid the other.



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Before the incident, the controller had told the pilot of the Cessna to “make an orbit and then continue downwind” for separation from other aircraft, but the Cessna pilot did not complete a full orbit and then turned onto base while the 717 was on final. The Cessna pilot had not read back his instructions to continue on downwind, and the controller had not requested a readback; published documents did not require a readback, the incident report said.

In addition, the report said, “The controller did not provide the pilot of the C-152 or the B-717 with traffic information or a number in the landing sequence, as required by published documents. This led to a reduction in the situational awareness of the pilots of both aircraft and excluded them from participating effectively in the separation process.”

After the incident, Airservices Australia said that it was “addressing the issue of obtaining readbacks” and had begun a standardization program to emphasize use of correct phraseology and readback.

FAA Issues AD on Airbus Crew Seats

One year after the French Direction Générale de l’Aviation Civile issued an airworthiness directive (AD) to require inspections of flight crew seats in some Airbus airplanes, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has taken similar action.

Both ADs require inspections to determine if a specific actuator is installed at the pilots’ seats and performance of applicable corrective actions.

FAA said that the AD was required because of a report of “heavy wear at the driving gear of the rotor-shaft end of the electrical driven motor on certain actuators of the pilot’s and copilot’s seats.” Implementation of the AD is intended to prevent uncommanded movement of the seats during takeoff or landing; this movement could interfere with airplane operations and result in temporary loss of control, FAA said.

The AD applies to some models of the A318, A319, A320, A321, A330 and A340.

In Other News ...

The **Italian Air Safety Board** has introduced a voluntary, confidential aviation safety reporting system intended to help prevent accidents.

... **Embraer** and **CAE** have agreed to establish a global joint venture to provide pilot and ground crew training for operators of Phenom 100 Very Light Jets and Phenom 300 Light Jets; training programs will begin in 2008 in Dallas and expand to sites in the eastern United States and Western Europe. ... **Sherry Carbary** has been named president of Alteon Training; she formerly was vice president of strategic management for Boeing Commercial Airplanes.



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Compiled and edited by Linda Werfelman.