

Safety News

Accident Investigation

The European Commission (EC) has proposed legislation aimed at making aviation accident investigation bodies more independent and providing more protection for aviation personnel who report sensitive safety information.

The EC said the proposal is intended to provide for independent investigations of accidents “as the surest way of identifying the causes ... and answering the fundamental question ‘what really happened?’” The proposal also would clarify the roles to be played by national government agencies and European Union (EU) bodies in accident investigation.



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“The current EU rules on investigating air accidents need to be updated to reflect the current realities of Europe’s aviation market and the complexity of the global aviation industry,” the EC said. “Investigating air accidents takes new kinds of expertise and more resources than a decade ago. The organizational set-up has also changed substantially, with the European Aviation Safety Agency now responsible for certifying aircraft in the EU.”

The EC said that the proposed legislation would protect sensitive safety information from “inappropriate use or unauthorized disclosure” and would provide judicial authorities with “more clarity as to the roles of the various bodies involved in investigating air accidents.”

It also would make accident investigations more efficient and more cost-effective, provide for a better exchange of information among the national investigation bodies and improve the quality of accident investigations throughout the EU. Other provisions would provide for improved implementation of safety recommendations, the EC said.

In addition, the proposal would provide accident victims and their families with improved access to assistance immediately after a crash, the EC said.

The EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament must approve the proposal before it will take effect, probably in 2011, the EC said.

Helicopter Work Groups

Flight Safety Foundation, through its Australian Advisory Board, has established the Australian Helicopter Advisory Group to work for improvements in helicopter safety throughout the country.

“With the key guiding principles of being impartial, independent and nonparochial, the [advisory group] will ... go a long way towards galvanizing the industry and improving helicopter safety,” said Terry Summers, the group’s chairman.

The group, which says it “aims to pursue the continuous improvement of helicopter safety and the prevention of accidents,” will identify safety issues and work with the Australian helicopter industry to address those issues, and provide a safety-focused independent voice for the industry.

Not Ready for Prime Time

Unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) are “not ready for seamless or routine use” in civilian aviation, Randy Babbitt, administrator of the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), says.

Babbitt told a meeting of the Aerospace Industries Association that unmanned aircraft are “the way of the future.” Nevertheless, he added that “they’re not ready for open access to the [national airspace system]. ...

“It’s fair to compare the advent of the UAS with the introduction of the jet engine. We’re talking about an exponential leap in capability, and that leap needs a contemporaneous jump in technology and procedures to do so safely.”

In the year that ended Sept. 30, 2009, there were 20,000 UAS flights in



U.S. Air Force

U.S. civilian airspace, Babbitt said. “But in order for us to get to the place where the UAS can become a viable, accepted part of the national airspace system, we have to make sure that sense-and-avoid is more than a given — it must be a guarantee,” he said.

He said that the FAA is developing rules for UAS operations and working with other organizations on UAS standards. Safety standards must be the same for all types of aircraft, “even if no one’s in the cockpit,” he said.

Emergency Designation

Radar data processing systems should be modified to allow air traffic controllers to apply a special designation if a flight is experiencing an emergency, the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) says.

In a letter to the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) recommending the modification, the NTSB cited the Jan. 15, 2009, ditching of a US Airways Airbus A320 in the Hudson River minutes after takeoff from LaGuardia Airport in New York City.

An emergency designation “causes radar data processing systems to display critical information about the

flight, including its location, to other controllers,” the NTSB said. “Aircraft experiencing an emergency are given air traffic control priority over all other traffic. To provide the most effective assistance, it is imperative for all controllers to know the location of the affected aircraft to prevent aircraft conflicts and collisions.”

The pilots of the US Airways A320 landed the airplane in the river after it ingested birds into both engines. All 156 people in the airplane evacuated; five were seriously injured, and 95 received minor injuries. The NTSB investigation of the accident is continuing.



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Blacklist Update

The European Commission (EC) has updated its list of airlines banned in the European Union to include all carriers from Djibouti, Congo and São Tomé and Príncipe.

Carriers from the three countries were banned after audits identified safety deficiencies in oversight by national aviation authorities, the EC said.

“We cannot afford any compromises in air safety,” said EC Vice President Antonio Tajani. “Citizens have the right to fly safely in Europe and anywhere else in the world. Our aim is not just to create a list of airlines that are dangerous. We are ready to help those countries to build up their technical and administrative capacity to guarantee the safety of civil aviation in their countries.”

The update — the 12th revision of the list since it was first issued in 2006 — noted “strengthened progress and cooperation” with Albania, Angola, Egypt, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan regarding the safety of their air carriers.

The list bans all carriers from 15 countries: Angola (except for one carrier operating under specific restrictions), Benin, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon (except for three carriers operating under restrictions), Indonesia, Kazakhstan (except for one carrier operating under restrictions), the Kyrgyz Republic, Liberia, Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, São Tomé and Príncipe, Swaziland and Zambia. Three other carriers also may operate under restrictions, and five individual carriers are banned from all operations in the European Union.

Wikimedia



ISASI Honors

The International Society of Air Safety Investigators (ISASI) has awarded its 2009 Jerome F. Lederer Aviation Award to Richard B. Stone, a retired Delta Air Lines captain, and to the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB).

The award, named for the founder of Flight Safety Foundation, is given for “outstanding lifetime contributions to technical excellence in furthering aviation accident investigation and achieving [ISASI] objectives,” the organization said.

The ATSB was recognized for its “worldwide reputation for excellence based on its operational independence, objectivity and technical competence in accident investigation” and its “expertise and contribution to the field of human factors at both the individual and organizational level.” The bureau also has been a leader in proactive accident investigation and safety enhancement, ISASI said.

Stone, now a consultant for government and industry aviation interests, retired from Delta in 1992. He was involved for more than two decades, as a member of the Air Line Pilots Association, International, in aircraft accident investigation and prevention efforts.

Anti-Icing Proposals

Scheduled airlines would be required to retrofit their aircraft with ice-detection equipment or to take steps to ensure that existing ice-protection systems activate at the appropriate time under a new rule proposed by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

The proposed rule would require ice-detection systems to alert flight crews every time an activation of an ice-protection system is necessary. In aircraft without ice-detection systems, flight crews would be required to activate the ice-protection system “based on cues listed in their airplane’s flight manual during climb and descent, and at the first sign of icing when at cruising altitude,” the FAA said.

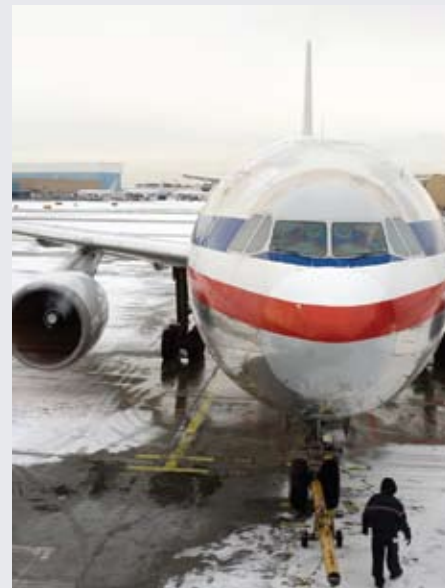
The proposed rule would affect in-service aircraft with takeoff weights of less than 60,000 lb (27,216 kg). Most larger aircraft already have equipment that meets the requirements, the FAA said. Technically, 1,866 airplanes could be affected by the proposed rule, but many already have the required

equipment. Some other, older airplanes probably will be retired from service before the projected 2012 compliance date, the FAA said.

“This is the latest action in our aggressive 15-year effort to address the safety of flight in icing conditions,” said FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt. “We want to make sure all classes of aircraft in scheduled service remain safe when they encounter icing.”

An August 2009 change in certification standards calls for new transport category airplane designs to require either automatic activation of ice-protection systems or a method of informing pilots when ice-protection systems should be activated.

In related action, the FAA said it will expand the classes of aircraft that will be prohibited from taking off with “polished frost” — frost that has been buffed so that it becomes smooth — on their wings, stabilizers and control surfaces. That rule, which affects 188 aircraft operated by 57 companies, will take effect Jan. 30, 2010. Major air



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carriers and regional carriers previously were banned from operating with polished frost.

“The FAA has advised pilots not to take off with frost or ice contaminating their wings for years because it made good sense; now, it’s the law,” Babbitt said.

In Other News ...

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority of Australia (CASA) is developing new guidelines for managing **wildlife hazards** near airports, in the aftermath of a report by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau that showed the number of bird strikes nearly doubling over a five-year period. CASA also said that the reporting of bird strikes is inconsistent. ... Eurocontrol has signed agreements with Belgium, France and Germany to establish a civil-military **performance measurement** service. The Pan-European Repository of Information Supporting Civil-Military Performance Measurements (PRISMIL) will enable governments to “review their airspace



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procedures and assess their performance in terms of flexible use of airspace operations in compliance with the Single European Sky requirements,” Eurocontrol said. ... The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board has recommended that **helicopter emergency medical services** (HEMS) operations involving government-owned aircraft should be subject to the same level of safety oversight applied to civil HEMS operations.

Edward W. Stimpson

Edward W. Stimpson, past chairman of the Flight Safety Foundation Board of Governors, former U.S. representative to the International Civil Aviation Organization and former president of the General Aviation Manufacturers Association, died of cancer Nov. 25 at his home in Idaho. He was 75.

Stimpson retired in November as chairman of the FSF Board (ASW, 10/09, p. 22).

FSF President William R. Voss praised Stimpson for his lifelong dedication to aviation safety, noting, “Anyone who flies ... owes a debt of gratitude to the work Amb. Stimpson did during his career.”

Compiled and edited by Linda Werfelman.