

New Zealand

Transport Accident Investigation Commission

Recent Developments & Experiences 2016/17

ICAO Audit 2016

In late 2016, auditors from the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) assessed New Zealand's compliance with ICAO standards. The scope of the audit was narrowed to cover only Accident Investigation processes because of the disruption to state services caused by earthquake activity at the time. The auditors were with TAIC for 8 days in total, covering all aspects of the TAIC and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) compliance with the provisions of Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation.

The audit was timely for us having just introduced new case management processes, and because we were developing an organisation-wide Quality Assurance system.

We are awaiting the final report but indications are:

- The auditors highly rated our technical facility saying it was industry leading.
- We are likely to achieve a 90% compliance rating. This compares favourably with our 2006 rating of 67%.

MAIIF

In November, TAIC is hosting the Marine Accident Investigators International Forum 2017. MAIIF seeks to advance maritime safety and the prevention of marine pollution through marine accident investigation, and fosters cooperation and communication between investigators.

TAIC expects approximately 60 representatives from about 20 countries to attend. The conference will include sessions on subjects as wide-ranging as collisions, engine room fires, public affairs, investigation best practice, crew fatigue, and life-saving technology.

Themes occurring in current inquiries

Aviation The Commission is currently paying particular attention to accidents involving helicopters, because in recent years they have appeared relatively frequently in notified occurrences. Of the 13 open aviation inquiries, 10 involve helicopters. Of those 10 inquiries, four relate to Robinson helicopters.

TAIC added Robinson helicopters to its Watchlist in October 2016 as a result of accidents investigated by the Commission and the Civil Aviation Authority involving mast bumping. Mast bumping occurs when part of the main rotor blade or rotor hub make contact with the main drive shaft (or mast). The result is often catastrophic and results in in-flight break up. The Commission has made recommendations to the manufacturer and the regulator about mast bumping. It is pleased that the response

to the issue has been positive and awareness of the problem has been raised among operators. There have been no mast bumping accidents in the last two years.

- Rail** In the rail mode, worksite safety has been a theme of recent inquiries, including the failure of workers to adhere to worksite protection practices. Two of these inquiries are still open.
- Maritime** In the maritime mode, there has been a recent spate of occurrences involving cruise ships. Half of the open maritime inquiries (five out of 10) involve cruise ships. Safety issues related to these accidents have not yet been fully identified. The number of cruise ships coming to New Zealand is growing; and that the number of ships, as well as the number of passengers per ship are forecast to increase. Any common safety issues could have significant implications.
- Tourism** As well as the inquiries involving cruise ships, three of the helicopter accidents dealt with by the Commission over the last 12 months have been in the tourism sector. Operators in this sector are more likely to carry passengers, sometimes into inaccessible or hazardous areas of the country — and therefore accidents have potentially higher consequences of damage, injury, and death; and for the reputation of the tourism sector.

Wellington earthquake business disruption

New Zealand suffered a 7.8 earthquake in November 2016, badly affecting the south eastern town of Kaikoura (South Island) and damaging buildings in Wellington. Wellington is New Zealand's capital city, centre of government and its supporting public service. Many public service organisations were compelled to re-house themselves because of structural damage to many buildings. TAIC's office building was one of the many affected. TAIC was required to temporarily re-locate in February. Now, in September, we are making plans to return to our building. A positive outcome from the earthquake disruption was the opportunity for us to test our business continuity arrangements. We proved ourselves resilient with minimal impact on productivity. Information and communication technologies enabled key operational business processes to be accessed and supported, enabling staff to work remotely either at home or from secondary sites.

Reporting to begin on progress in implementing TAIC recommendations

Unlike some of its colleague agencies in other parts of the world, TAIC is not empowered by legislation to require recipients to respond when a recommendation is issued to them.

As the result of a Ministerial request, TAIC, in conjunction with the regulators (the recipients of most of TAIC's recommendations), has been working to establish a reporting system. The reporting aims to make it clear what actions regulators are taking in response to recommendations; or, if they have not accepted a recommendation, the reasons why. The report is to be available to the public.

The reporting process will be a significant step in bringing into focus TAIC's effectiveness in improving safety in the New Zealand transport sector.