

MEDIA STATEMENT

5 August 2013

SACAA grounds Comair and SAA Boeing 737 classic fleet

Midrand. The South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) has regrettably come to a decision to ground 13 aircraft operated by Comair and SAA in terms of Section 115 of the Civil Aviation Act, 2009 (Act 13 of 2009). The reason for grounding the aircraft is that the SACAA has come to learn that these operators failed to comply fully with Airworthiness Directive (AD) 201-15-10 which was issued on 27 July 2010 by the FAA. The directive was effective as at 31 August 2010. The decision to ground the fleet is effective immediately.

The said Airworthiness Directive results from reports of fractures that resulted from stress corrosion and pitting along the length of the spindle and spindle diameter, and additional reports of corrosion on the outboard flap carriage spindles. This AD was issued in order to detect and correct cracked, corroded, or fractured carriage spindles, and to prevent severe flap asymmetry, which could result in reduced control or loss of controllability of the airplane. The compliance period for this directive was twenty four (24) months and came to an end on 30 August 2012. The affected fleet per operator are 11 for Comair and 2 for SAA which are used for passengers and cargo respectively. The affected fleet involve the Boeing 737 classic series.

The operator has reported that they successfully checked for cracked /fractured flap carriage spindles (four per aircraft) as required with no negative findings however they omitted to overhaul the spindles before the 24 months expired which fell on 31 August 2012 or prior to reaching 12000 flight cycles (if these are known).

The above non-compliance poses imminent danger to the aviation industry and the general public and has serious implications on aviation safety as the affected aircraft are currently un-airworthy.

The talks between the SACAA and SAA Technical, the Aircraft Maintenance Organisation that maintains this fleet, are that the operators need to conduct the outstanding maintenance on the fleet and submit proof of compliance to the Regulator before the aircraft can be released for operation again. The Maintenance Organisation has committed to the Regulator that this state of compliance will be met by Thursday 8 August 2013. The SACAA values the relationship we have with the industry however the value of the lives of our flying community will always supercede maintaining cordial relations with any member of the industry. We have been reassured and we trust that the affected operators will address the safety compliance concerns speedily.

Airworthiness Directives are issued by manufacturers or the State of certification to warn all operators of pending dangers, defects or hazards which may compromise the safety of the flying community. The directives are normally prescriptive with regards to the time in which the directive should be complied with and failure to adhere to these prescriptions may render the aircraft un-airworthy.

The SACAA introduced administrative penalties in 2010 with the intention of exploring various measures of enforcing civil aviation regulations. It is therefore highly regrettable when we are left with no choice but to ground aircraft. This decision is always considered with the seriousness it deserves to avoid unnecessarily inconveniencing the flying community. It should therefore be understood that when such a decision is reached is it based on the belief that any lesser penalty is simply not commensurate with the related repercussions that may result if ignored.

The SACAA would like to assure the members of the public that it regards its statutory mandate of ensuring aviation safety and security to be of paramount importance. South

Africa boasts a 0% accident rate on South African soil in the large aircraft sector and we are determined to maintain this impeccable record.

The SACAA remains confident that the aviation safety and security records in the country exceed the minimum standards and in fact compare favourably in terms of the best international standards and practice. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the USA subjects the SACAA to comprehensive audits of its safety oversight system on an on-going basis. The results of these audits continuously reveal that aviation safety and security in South Africa is rated amongst the best in the world.

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About the SACAA:

The South African Civil Aviation Authority ("SACAA") is a juristic body established in terms of the Civil Aviation Act, 2009 (Act No. 13 of 2009) ("the Act"). SACAA is governed and controlled by the Civil Aviation Authority Board ("the Board"). In terms of mandate, the SACAA is tasked with promoting and maintaining 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.

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