

CemAir's Air Operator Certificates suspended with immediate effect

[Johannesburg]. The South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) has put a stop to CemAir's operations following the suspension of the airlines' Part 121 and 135 Air Operator Certificates (AOCs). The suspension is with immediate effect (i.e. as at 17h00 on Friday, 11 January 2019). The suspension was necessitated by the SACAA's concerns over the systemic failure of the airline's maintenance controls. In a nutshell, the most recent annual renewal audit revealed CemAir's inability to prove the continued airworthiness of its fleet.

It is against the norm for the SACAA to publicly detail a chronological account of events leading to its oversight decisions. However, given several previous records with alternative information; on this occasion, the SACAA will reluctantly provide a synopsis of events leading to this decision, lest an inaccurate version miraculously emerges.

1. Subsequent to the settlement that was made a court order relating to the first suspension that followed the prohibition order issued against CemAir, the SACAA proceeded with the finalisation of the renewal audit of CemAir's operations between 21 and 24 December 2018.
2. This audit revealed eleven (11) findings of which five (5) were classified as Level 1. The operator has submitted an acceptable Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for 10 of the findings.
3. CemAir subsequently submitted a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) aimed at addressing one of the Level 1 findings related to the continued airworthiness of the operator's fleet. The initial CAP and subsequent revised versions were reviewed and found to be unacceptable.
4. On 26 December 2018, the SACAA, and in the interests of aviation safety, grounded eight (8) of the airline's aircraft with immediate effect.
5. Between 28 December 2018 and 11 January 2019 there were numerous interactions between the operator and the regulator. In between, the SACAA also visited CemAir operations in order to gather evidence and confirm that the continued airworthiness finding is addressed satisfactorily. These follow-up inspection exercises did not meet the regulators' expectations and the necessary evidence could not be produced by the operator.
6. During the audit, the SACAA also learnt that an aircraft manufacturer had given CemAir an assessment of their aircraft maintenance schedule with findings and recommendations on what the operator needed to do in order to get the maintenance status of their fleet on track, and worryingly the operator could not produce sufficient evidence to authenticate

that all recommendations were fully implemented. Ignoring manufacturer's recommendations is not only bizarre but is also a very serious and dangerous omission that should be avoided at all cost by any licence-holder.

7. Based on the renewal audit findings and the subsequent confirmation of the systemic maintenance failure, it became evident and without a doubt that CemAir is simply unable to prove the continued airworthiness of its entire fleet.
8. Due to the serious nature of the findings and the impact they have on aviation safety, a decision was taken to immediately suspend CemAir's Part 121 and 135 AOCs.

It must be noted that there is a provision in terms of Part 185 of the South African civil aviation regulations that affords the operator the right to appeal to the Director of Civil Aviation should they feel aggrieved by this suspension. The appeal must be made within 30 days from the date of receipt of the suspension letter, meaning that the appeal must be lodged before 11 February 2019. However, the submission of an appeal does not nullify the suspension.

The responsibility to ensure safe and secure aviation operations lies primarily in the hands of each and every licence-holder. The 'catch-me-if-you-can' attitude or predisposition to await recommendations and findings before attending to safety and security matters is dangerous and puts the lives of many at risk.

As with all operators, the SACAA is willing, able, and on stand-by to assist CemAir to comply with the requisite civil aviation regulatory prescripts.

The SACAA is mandated with regulating civil aviation safety and security thereby ensuring the safety of the flying community. The main reason why some enforcement actions are made public is to empower and alert the flying community to make informed decisions when utilising aviation operators.

The SACAA, once again, places it on record that it will undertake its mandate without any form of fear, favour, or prejudice. It is important that we do so lest we lose lives while turning a blind eye on non-compliances by those driven by profit and other factors. The SACAA's mandate is strictly prescribed in the Civil Aviation Act and the regulator will not tolerate any behaviour that will undermine the safety of passengers, crew and those on the ground. The SACAA will always endeavour to protect the good safety record that South Africa has worked hard to maintain thus far.

-ENDS-

About the SACAA:

The South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) is a Schedule 3A public entity reporting to the Department of Transport established in terms of the Civil Aviation Authority Act, 2009 (Act No 13 of 2009) (the Act). 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.

For more information contact:

Email: media@caa.co.za

Website: www.caa.co.za

Kabelo Ledwaba
Mobile Number: 083 451 2616
Email: ledwabak@caa.co.za

Pappie Maja
Mobile Number: 083 451 2627
Email: majap@caa.co.za