

Foreign Aircraft Ramp Inspections Information to Aircraft Operators

Introduction

The responsibility of safety oversight of an aircraft operator lies primary with the state of operator. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Annex 6 Part I paragraph 4.2.2.2 and Part III, Section II paragraph 2.2.2.2 require Contracting States to establish a programme with procedures for the surveillance of operations in its territory by foreign air operators and taking appropriate action when necessary to preserve safety. Those responsibilities are in accordance with Thailand Air Navigation Act, Section 41/122 and 41/123.

The Ramp Inspections are by nature on-the-spot assessments which serve as proxies but are not intended to, and they cannot, substitute proper regulatory oversight nor guarantee the airworthiness of a particular aircraft or the capability of the operator's flight operations. The regulatory oversight of the operator or owner of an aircraft is the responsibility of the State of Operator or State of Registry.

During Inspection

Some inconveniences may be encountered by flight and cabin crews, handling agents and other personnel involved in the ground handling activities during the inspection. CAAT inspectors adopt the principle of minimizing inconveniences and disruptions to operations and will endeavor to complete the inspection before the scheduled departure time. If it is a transit flight, the inspection will be conducted with in turn-around time. CAAT adopt policy not to delay an aircraft except for safety reasons.

The ramp inspections may cover areas of flight operations, airworthiness, cabin safety and cargo handling, including dangerous goods. A checklist of 53 inspection items is used during the inspection. Checks may include:

- licenses of pilots;
- procedures and manuals that should be carried in the cockpit;
- compliance with these procedures by flight and cabin crew;
- safety equipment in cockpit and cabin;
- cargo carried in the aircraft (including the transport of dangerous goods); and
- the technical condition of the aircraft

“Proof of inspection” form will give to cockpit crew (or alternatively to other representatives of the operator) when the inspection has been finalized; this form shows the contact details of the operational details of the flight, the checked inspection items and findings. The inspector will request the Pilot in Command to sign a copy of the proof of inspection. This signature is only to confirm that the form has been handed over to the crew; the Pilot in Command does not certify with his/her signature the he/she agrees with the findings. The information on the Proof of Inspection form may be subject to change when entered into the database as a result of quality checks in the findings, and may lead to an amendment, deletion or re-categorization of findings.

Findings and follow-up actions

Finding determined during an inspection are categorized according to the magnitude of the deviation of the requirements and to the influence on safety of the non-compliance as applicable with international standards (i.e. Chicago convention its Annexes and ICAO regional Standards) which are the minimum Standards to be observed by any aircraft engaged in international navigation. Minor deviations (category 1) are reported to the pilot in command. If an inspection identifies one or more significant deviations from the safety standards (category 2 findings), these will also be reported to the operators and its competent authority. When non-compliances have a major impact on safety (category 3), the flight crew in addition expected to correct such non-compliance before the aircraft departs. Relevant information not being a deficiency may be reported as a category “G” (General) remarks.

For Findings where there are reasonable to ground to believe that the aircraft is unsafe or illegal to conduct or continue its flight, CAAT inspectors may delay or ground the aircraft. Under such circumstances, the operator or the owner is required to rectify or provide justification or evidence that would allow CAAT inspectors to release the aircraft.

Post Inspection

After inspection, CAAT inspector will conduct debrief on the outcome of the inspection to the Pilot in Command or representatives of the operator. The inspector may also hands over the proof of inspection form to the Pilot in Command to sign a copy of the Proof of Inspection form for his/her acknowledgement.

- For category 1 finding/s, a written e-mail communication will be sent to the operator
- For category 2 and/or category 3 findings, a written e-mail or letter will be sent to the operator. In addition, the detail of findings will also be sent to the State of Operator or State of Registry (if different from the state of Operator) for their information or follow-up action if the deem fit. In cases such as repetitive or serious findings, CAAT may request the State of Operator or State of Registry to confirm that they are satisfied by corrective actions taken and/or planned by operator.

Role of Operator

For all findings, it is responsibility of the operator to ensure they provide information on the corrective actions to CAAT within 30 days of notification of the findings. These actions should include a root cause analysis and may consist of actions taken and/or planned to correct deficiencies, and any actions to prevent/limit re-occurrence in the future.

For the purpose of enhancing safety, data from ramp inspection may be shared with civil aviation authorities. These data will also be used for subsequent risk assessment on an operator. Therefore, operators are encouraged to proactively address any findings in effective and timely manner.

If you have any enquiries, please write in to contact.faoc@caat.or.th