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InFO

Information for Operators

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http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/info

An InFO contains valuable information for operators that should help them meet certain administrative, regulatory, or operational requirements with relatively low urgency or impact on safety. The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

Subject: United States (U.S.) Operator Responsibilities Associated with the European Union (EU) Ramp Inspection Programme (RIP), formerly referred to as EU's Safety Assessment of Foreign Aircraft (SAFA) RIP.

Purpose: This InFO serves to inform U.S. operators of their responsibilities associated with EU's RIP.

Background: The SAFA RIP began in the EU community in 1996 and has evolved into a ramp inspection tool that is utilized by at least 49 countries. The EU RIP is managed by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and continues to focus on EU and non-EU aircraft landing at airports within EU member states and other non-EU participating states. The FAA signed a cooperative arrangement with EASA to receive safety information and notices from the SAFA RIP in 2011. Aircraft suspected of noncompliance with safety standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) have a greater chance of a ramp inspections.

The ramp inspections carried out by EU RIP participating member states follows a common procedure, using a checklist covering the array of inspection areas based on ICAO standards. It is EASA policy that ramp inspections will not delay aircraft except for safety reasons. Ramp Inspection Programme inspectors may not be able to complete all checklist items if an aircraft has a short turnaround time. Regardless of if an EU RIP inspection is completed in its entirety or not, it is an on-the-spot ramp inspection that does not substitute regulatory oversight of the state of the operator or the state of registry, as applicable. A completed RIP inspection does not guarantee the aircraft is airworthy; instead, it focuses on evaluating compliance with 54 inspection areas that consist of ICAO requirements and specific EASA criteria.

Discussion: When an EU RIP ramp inspection results in a finding identified within a checklist item, it is categorized as a 1, 2, or 3. The category is dependent upon the magnitude of the deviation from the international requirements and the impact on safety associated with the noncompliance.

- **Category 1 Finding.** A Category 1 finding is considered a minor deviation and is reported to the pilot-in-command (PIC) (operator).

- **Category 2 Finding.** A Category 2 finding is considered a significant deviation from safety standards. The findings are reported to the operator and the oversight authority of the operator. For U.S. operators, Category 2 findings are reported to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).
- **Category 3 Finding.** A Category 3 finding is one that has a major impact on safety. The reporting requirements are the same as Category 2. Category 3 findings are expected to be corrected by the operator before the aircraft departs either by correcting the deficiency or by imposing limitations or restrictions on the operation of the aircraft. These limitations may be imposed by the inspecting authority.

The EU RIP database is a computerized multifunction database system that contains all of the data generated by the EU RIP. The EASA regularly reviews and analyzes the database information, informs the participating member states of the analysis results, and advises them of any identified potential safety hazards. The 2011 arrangement between EASA and FAA allows the FAA read-only access to EASA's RIP database and is further limited to the findings and notifications made to the U.S. operators that have undergone ramp inspections with the participating member states. These U.S. operators also have access to this database, however, their access is limited specifically to their respective operations.

The FAA's EU RIP National Coordinator(s) is assigned to the International Program Division and may be contacted at 9-AVS-AFS-SAFA@faa.gov.

Any U.S. operator who receives a EU RIP ramp inspection and is issued a Category 1, 2, or 3 finding is responsible for all immediate and future actions required to clear the finding to the satisfaction of the EU RIP pursuant to and in accordance with the requirements of Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations part 91, § 91.703. Failure by the operator to respond within 60 days of notification of inspection findings, failure to address repetitive findings, or failure to address safety items could result in operational restriction(s) applied to that operator, up to and including rescinding flight authorizations and barring the operator from future operations into applicable state(s). Additional information on the EU RIP is available at: <https://www.easa.europa.eu/easa-and-you/air-operations/ramp-inspection-programmes-safa-saca>. The status of EU RIP findings may affect the application and issuance of EASA Third Country Operator (TCO) authorization.

Recommended Action: Directors of Safety, Directors of Operations, Directors of Maintenance, and pilots should become familiar with the above-identified web page and the EU RIP. U.S. operators must, in accordance with § 91.703(a)(2), be responsive to EU RIP findings and address all findings within 30 days of the initial notification of inspection findings. If an operator does not provide a response to the finding(s), the operator will be sent a subsequent reminder from EASA and provided an additional 30 days to respond. In addition, U.S. operators should be prepared for their assigned FAA principal inspectors (PIs) to conduct follow-up surveillance to confirm the operator's compliance.

Contact: Questions or comments regarding this InFO should be directed to the International Program Division, International Operations Branch at (202) 267-0962 or email address: 9-AVS-AFS-SAFA@faa.gov.