



International Civil Aviation Organization

ELECTRONIC BULLETIN

For information only

EB 2022/14

13 April 2022

REPORT ON THE SYMPOSIUM ON ASSISTANCE TO AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES

1. The Symposium on Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and their Families (AAAVF 2021), held from 1 to 3 December 2021 in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Islas Canarias), Spain, provided an overview of the regulatory framework defined by Annex 9 — *Facilitation* and Annex 13 — *Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation* to the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* and addressed various issues and challenges faced in handling aircraft accidents. The event concluded with thirty recommendations, as listed in the attachment, which were endorsed by the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) during its 225th Session. The AAAVF 2021 Report and other related documentation can be found on the Symposium's website at <https://www.icao.int/Meetings/AAAVF2021/Pages/default.aspx>.
2. As the AAAVF 2021 recommendations would be of benefit to various relevant national authorities, aircraft and airports operators, insurance companies, communication media and other stakeholders, stakeholders are invited to consider the recommendations addressed to States and industry stakeholders and disseminate this bulletin accordingly.
3. ICAO reaffirms its commitment to continue to work with States, industry and family associations on this very important priority.

Enclosure:

List of AAAVF 2021 Recommendations

Issued under the authority of the Secretary General

ATTACHMENT to EB

LIST OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF AAVF 2021

The thirty recommendations are listed below referring to potential actions by ICAO, by States and/or by other stakeholders:

1. ICAO to encourage States to implement existing Annex 9 Recommended Practice 8.46, as well as ICAO Doc 9998 and Doc 9937. The participants suggested that ICAO issue a State Letter attaching the AAVF Symposium final report, in the process requesting implementation of the report's conclusions and recommendations;
2. It was also suggested for ICAO to review and update Doc 9998 and Doc 9973 building on recent experiences;
3. ICAO to continue to monitor compliance of AAVF-related SARPs via the ICAO USOAP, while additional information is gathered through the EFOD mechanism;
4. ICAO Council to upgrade ICAO Recommended Practice 8.46 to an international Standard, thus in accordance with Article 37 of the *Convention on International Civil Aviation* (Chicago Convention) creating an obligation for States to comply with the provision, if no difference is filed. The Standard is to be audited by USOAP;
5. An assessment is to be conducted considering the overarching issue of support to victims and families in all the Annexes, identifying any gaps and formulating further recommendations as required;
6. ICAO should promote a combination of regulation, training and cooperation among authorities, service providers, airlines and including the ACVFFI and its associations in order to improve the implementation by States, aircraft and airport operators of the ICAO Doc 9998;
7. ICAO should promote implementation of ICAO Doc 9998, the ratification of MC99 and compliance with Annex 9 SARPs. ICAO should organize regional workshops in States/Regions with special needs relying on the support of ACVFFI and its associations, as required;
8. Regional offices of ICAO should play an active part in promoting the policies above and organizing the workshops relying on the support of ACVFFI and its associations, as required;
9. The AAVF function in the ICAO Secretariat should be focused and supported by an identified responsible unit;
10. Wide effort is required to call upon the responsibility of communication media and agencies to treat accident information respecting the dignity of victims, families and individuals. Building on experiences of some recent tragedies beyond aviation could help. ICAO should prepare a compilation of best practices currently applied by States and agents. An assessment of those best practices may need to consider the formulation of a communication code of conduct to be shared worldwide;
11. The ratification of MC99 is to be encouraged as there is no uniformity worldwide in the treatment of victims and families;

12. A specific initiative is required to standardize the process to be followed by families when an accident occurs, including proper guidance that puts steps into simple language;
13. The timely issuance of advance payments must become global practice. A targeted workshop is suggested to advance on the topic so as to identify further decisions to be taken. Additionally, a total level of compulsory compensation is to be reviewed in proportion to the insurance policies subscribed by aircraft operators. ICAO should organize a specific ad hoc forum to deal with compensation and facilitating procedures for survivors and families of victims;
14. An ICAO group, supported by the appropriate legal expertise, should consider best practices of insurance companies and their relationship with victims and families, balancing the needs of airlines and also victims and families;
15. Following the specific forum held to discuss compensation, and after having analysed the best practices of insurance companies, the community should assess whether review of MC99 and other related treaties is needed;
16. The ICAO Accident Investigation Panel (AIGP) should consider proposing guidance material for accident investigators to provide focused briefing material, including “what, when and how” information to families of victims;
17. The AIGP should also consider providing guidance on how to address communication media when an accident occurs and how to continue providing verified, on-time information for public release, while protecting the investigation process;
18. Independence, rigor and technical capability of accident investigation authorities are fundamental prerequisites for providing value to the accident investigation findings and also, importantly, to provide credibility to the accident reports. Absence of conflict of interest is essential. Promotion by ICAO of regional cooperation will assist in improving the investigation process alleviating cases of limited technical resources and/or experience in certain States;
19. Clear independence of the accident investigation authority, whose main objective is to determine the root causes of the accident and avoid its recurrence, and the judicial investigation, to conclude on potential criminal responsibilities, needs to be stressed by ICAO;
20. Accident investigation Final Reports should be easily understandable for families and translated in all the languages of interest to the families;
21. Transparency regarding accident investigation reports should be enhanced through an ICAO web platform, where the exchange of reports and their recommendations amongst investigation authorities and experts could be facilitated;
22. ICAO should create a web platform to facilitate the exchange of information for safety investigation authorities and experts;
23. ICAO should support State’s capacity building, including through the recently developed training course related to assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families and based on Doc 9998 and Doc 9973, to help States establish foundational knowledge. In delivering the course ICAO should cooperate with the ACVFFI to provide additional factual experience and credibility;

24. IATA is encouraged to make use of the ICAO Doc 9998 and incorporate AAVF into their plans. While ICAO audits States in the compliance of SARPs, IATA is invited to integrate the monitoring of airlines plans through its IOSA audit program;
25. IATA is invited to integrate the assistance to victims and families into the work of its expert group on Emergency Planning and to consider the participation of ACVFFI in this group;
26. ACI, considering the importance of the airports of departure and arrival and those located close to the site of the accident in facilitating the arrangements following an air catastrophe, is invited to include the auditing, monitoring and accrediting of plans for support to victims and families in its accreditation programmes of their members;
27. ICAO should enhance cooperation between ICAO, IATA, ACI and CANSO, and other interested organizations, including through the development of multi-branded guidance documents;
28. The report of the first AAVF Symposium, including conclusions and recommendations, should be posted on the ICAO website and also be published in paper format so as to extend the lessons learned and to serve as a basis for future similar events in other States;
29. States, and associations such as IATA and ACI, are invited to collaborate with ACVFFI before, during and after an aircraft accident occurs, making use of previous experiences; and
30. It is recommended that the AAVF Symposium be given continuity in the future with similarly-arranged symposia, to be organized on a biannual or triannual basis to fit within the ICAO Assembly cycle. ICAO should inform the Assembly of the outcomes of these events.