

SAFETY INFORMATION 13/2024

30th August 2024



COCKPIT DISTRACTION DURING CRITICAL PHASE OF FLIGHT

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This Safety Information (SI) aims to remind all pilots and air operators of the need to maintain the highest level of safety and situational awareness during critical phases of flight.

2 Overview

- 2.1 Cockpit distractions pose a significant threat to flight safety, particularly during critical phases such as taxi, take off, landing, and operations below 10,000 feet. These distractions can divert a pilot's attention from essential tasks, leading to mistakes or delayed responses that can compromise the safety of the flight.

3 Types of Cockpit Distractions

- 3.1 **Electronic Devices:** The use of personal electronic devices, such as smartphones, tablets and cameras, can distract pilots. Even a momentary glance from instruments to check a device can result in loss of situational awareness.
- 3.2 **Non-Essential Conversations:** Conversations not related to the immediate operation of the flight, especially during critical phases, can draw attention away from necessary tasks and procedures.
- 3.3 **Passenger or Cabin Crew Interactions:** Requests or questions from passengers or cabin crew during key moments of a flight can disrupt the pilot's focus.
- 3.4 **Loose Items:** Unsecured items in the cockpit present significant risks, particularly during turbulence or other in-flight manoeuvres. These items may become a distraction and also potentially interfere with controls or instruments, creating hazardous conditions in-flight.

4 Consequences of Distraction

- 4.1 Loss of Situational Awareness: Distractions can lead to a pilot losing track of the aircraft's position, altitude, or attitude, increasing the risk of controlled flight into terrain (CFIT) or other hazardous situations.
- 4.2 Delayed Decision-Making: When distracted, pilots may fail to respond promptly to changing flight conditions or emergencies.
- 4.3 Increased Risk of Incidents: Historical data shows that distraction in the cockpit has become one of the contributing factors in several incidents and accidents, underscoring the need for strict adherence to distraction mitigation practices.

5 Best Practices

- 5.1 Adherence to Sterile Cockpit Policy: Ensure all non-essential activities are avoided during the critical phases of flight.
- 5.2 Secure Loose Items: Keep all personal and operational items properly stowed before take-off and landing.
- 5.3 Minimise Use of Electronic Devices: Limit the use of electronic devices to only essential functions necessary for flight operations.
- 5.4 Focus on Communication: Ensure clear, concise communication with other flight crew members and air traffic controllers, avoiding any non-essential conversations.

6 Regulatory Compliance

6.1 Policy Compliance

- 6.1.1 The Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia (CAAM) mandates strict adherence to policies such as the sterile cockpit rule, which is enforced by airlines operating within Malaysia. This rule requires that pilots avoid non-essential activities and distractions during critical phases of flight. Compliance with these policies are crucial for maintaining safety and preventing accidents caused by lapses in attention.

6.2 Video Recording and Compliance

- 6.2.1 The recording and posting of videos during critical phases of flight are subject to the specific policies of each airline. Any non-compliance of these policies, as evidenced by such recordings, will result in disciplinary actions against the individual involved and potentially the airline as well.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Cockpit distractions are a preventable risk that can compromise safety. By strictly adhering to regulations and company policies, focusing on essential tasks, and minimising distractions, pilots can uphold the highest standards of safety throughout the flight.



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