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PROCEDURES FOR THE CONDUCT OF FLIGHTS IN AIRSPACE CONTAMINATED WITH VOLCANIC ASH

This AIC replaces AIC A 04/2022 dated 22 SEP 2022.

1 General

The purpose of this promulgation is to provide information about the procedures for the safe conduct of flights in airspace contaminated with volcanic ash and about the pertinent publications and meteorological information. This promulgation explains, in particular, the procedures for operators of aircraft that are subject to the scope of the Georgian Civil Aviation Agency Director's orders No 203 of October 11, 2013 "Rules of flight operation of airplanes" and No 220 of October 22, 2013 "Rules of flight operation of helicopters". The procedures are in line with the recommendations of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), ICAO Doc 9974 [1] and of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), EASA Safety Information Bulletin (SIB) 2010-17R7 [2], which means that they are in line with the procedures of the Member States of ICAO and the European Union.

2 Principles for flight operations in airspace contaminated with volcanic ash

The operator of an aircraft is responsible for the safety of its operations under the oversight of the competent aeronautical authority. The guiding principle for flight operations in airspace contaminated with volcanic ash is the conduct of a safety risk assessment in line with the procedure described in ICAO Doc 9974 [1] and in the EASA Safety Information Bulletin (SIB) 2010-17R7 [2].

- Flights through visible or discernible volcanic ash should be avoided, in particular, if the visibility of the ash is impeded (e.g. in instrument meteorological conditions (IMC), at night).

- As part of their safety management system (SMS), operators should provide for adequate safety risk assessments to investigate and decide if flight operations can be conducted into airspace forecast to be, or aerodromes known to be, contaminated with volcanic ash. Such safety risk assessments should have been accepted through the competent aeronautical authority.

- The safety and control measures set out in ICAO Doc 9974 [1] and the EASA Safety Information Bulletin (SIB) 2010-17R7 [2] are considered sufficient to facilitate acceptance, without further investigation, by a State whose airspace is forecast to be contaminated with volcanic ash. On the basis of the implementation of these internationally accepted safety management principles, the State can be confident in the ability of operators from other States to undertake operations safely in its airspace.

3 Definitions

3.1 Contamination levels of airspace affected by volcanic ash

The level of contamination with volcanic ash is defined as follows:

i) Areas of low contamination:
An airspace of defined dimensions where volcanic ash may be encountered at concentrations greater than 0.2×10^{-3} g/m^3, but less than or equal to 2×10^{-3} g/m^3;

ii) Areas of medium contamination:
An airspace of defined dimensions where volcanic ash may be encountered at concentrations greater than 2×10^{-3} g/m^3, but less than 4×10^{-3} g/m^3;

iii) Areas of high contamination:
An airspace of defined dimensions where volcanic ash may be encountered at concentrations equal to or greater than 4×10^{-3} g/m^3.

These definitions are consistent with ICAO EUR/NAT Volcanic Ash Contingency Plan (VACP) (ICAO EUR Doc 019/NAT Doc 006 Part II) [3] and the EASA Safety Information Bulletin (SIB) 2010-17R7 [2].

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3.2 Publication of information about the contamination of airspace with volcanic ash

Information about the contamination of airspace with volcanic ash is promulgated by the ICAO Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre (VAAC) and the Meteorological Service Provider (LTD “Sakaeronavigatsia”) by means of the following publications:

i) **NOTAM**
Whenever necessary, the procedures for the conduct of flights in airspace contaminated with volcanic ash will be activated by a NOTAM with the pertinent reference to the Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP) Georgia;

ii) **VAAC forecasts**
According to the provisions of ICAO and EASA, it is recommended to use the forecasts prepared by VAAC Toulouse or VAAC London as well as the forecasts of volcanic ash concentrations also provided by the VAAC when planning and conducting flights in European airspace;

iii) **SIGMET** as well as observation and forecast data of Meteorological Service of Georgia to ensure the meteorological safety of aviation, the MET Service provides information of the VAAC as well as their own observation and forecast data concerning volcanic ash in Georgian airspace. These data are published on the website www.airnav.ge of the LTD Sakaeronavigatsia and are freely available to all decision-makers and airspace users.

According to the ICAO provisions, the LTD Sakaeronavigatsia disseminates SIGMET within the scope of their meteorological observations and advises users as the case arises.

When making their decisions for the conduct of a flight, pilots must take into account that the VAAC forecasts may differ from the current measurements as well as from the data and forecasts provided by the Georgian Meteorological Service. The decision-making should therefore mainly be based on the more detailed information provided by the national meteorological service and explicitly not only on the VAAC forecast.

4 Use of safety risk assessment in Georgia

4.1 Operators of aircraft certified in Georgia in accordance with the Georgian Civil Aviation Agency Director’s order No 142 of August 19, 2013 “Air Operators Certification Rules” in conjunction with the Georgian Civil Aviation Agency Director’s order No 203 of October 11, 2013 “Rules of flight operation of airplanes” [4] and No 220 of October 22, 2013 “Rules of flight operation of helicopters” [5], make their decisions concerning the conduct of flights into airspace forecast to be, or aerodromes known to be, contaminated with volcanic ash, on the basis of their safety risk assessment in the forecast areas with low, medium and high contamination in accordance with the Georgian Civil Aviation Agency Director’s order No 203 of October 11, 2013 “Rules of flight operation of airplanes”[4] and No 220 of October 22, 2013 “Rules of flight operation of helicopters” [5]. If it is known that airspaces or aerodromes are contaminated with volcanic ash, operators of aircraft shall conduct their flight operations according to the result of their accepted safety risk assessment and the procedures laid down in the relevant manuals.

4.2 Mutual acceptance of safety risk assessments/third countries

With respect to the entire decision-making process concerning the operation of aircraft into airspace forecast to be, or aerodromes known to be, contaminated with volcanic ash, Georgia permits operators of aircraft registered in other States to make their decision in line with the above-mentioned approach (see 4.1) to operate in Georgia on the basis of their safety risk assessment, provided that it has been accepted by the competent authority of their respective State.

5 Volcanic ash pilot reports and occurrence reporting

5.1 In-flight reporting

Pilots encountering volcanic ash within the Tbilisi FIR, shall report this to the air traffic control unit they are in radiotelephony contact with. Pilots should also submit a report to the air traffic control unit if they do not encounter any ash in areas where volcanic ash has been forecast.

5.2 Post-flight reporting

The procedures described in the ICAO EUR/NAT Volcanic Ash Contingency Plan (VACP) (ICAO EUR Doc 019/NAT Doc 006 Part II) Appendix 2 [3] shall be applied.

5.3 Occurrence reporting

Special occurrences in aircraft and/or aircraft engines and/or volcanic ash encounters are subject to mandatory reporting in accordance with Georgian Civil Aviation Agency Director’s Order N17 of February 5, 2014 "Rules for the occurrence report". The reporting procedures laid down in the aircraft operator's manuals shall be complied with.

6 Special safeguard provisions and general orders

To avert operational hazards to the safety of air traffic and to public safety or order, the Director of Georgian Civil Aviation Agency can also temporarily adopt special safeguard provisions and general orders.

7 Reference documents

Further explanations can be found in the following reference documents:

[1] ICAO Doc 9974 - Flight Safety and Volcanic Ash

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[2] EASA Safety Information Bulletin (SIB) 2010-17R7
[3] ICAO EUR/NAT Volcanic Ash Contingency Plan (VACP) (ICAO EUR Doc 019/NAT Doc 006 Part II)
[4] Georgian Civil Aviation Agency Director’s order No 203 of October 11, 2013 “Rules of flight operation of airplanes”
[5] Georgian Civil Aviation Agency Director’s order No 220 of October 22, 2013 “Rules of flight operation of helicopters”

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