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Safety recommendation: AIC 20-R32/19-2002

Addressed to: Air Niugini Limited

Date issued: 2 October 2020

Investigation link: AIC 19-2002

Action status: Closed

Introduction

On 21 November 2019, at about 16:00 local time (06:00 UTC), the Papua New Guinea Accident Investigation Commission became aware about an alleged occurrence earlier that afternoon, involving a Fokker 70 aircraft, registered P2-ANY, owned and operated by Air Niugini Limited.

On 22 November 2019, at 16:13, upon request of the AIC, Papua New Guinea Air Services Limited provided details of the occurrence. Subsequently, the AIC commenced an investigation and immediately dispatched a team of investigators to Air Niugini Limited head office to commence onsite activities.

Occurrence

On 21 November 2019, at about 15:21 local time (05:21 UTC), a Fokker 70 aircraft, registered P2-ANY, owned and operated by Air Niugini Limited, while conducting a scheduled flight from Tokua Airport, East New Britain Province to Jacksons International Airport, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea experienced a rapid depressurisation event during a normal descent, about 51 nm North East of Jacksons.

The aircraft had four crew; two pilots and two Cabin Crew, and 41 passengers.

P2-ANY landed at 15:47, and taxied to the parking bay where a normal disembarkation was conducted for all passengers and crew. There were no injuries or damage reported.

Safety deficiency description

The SCC stated that a child who was seated alone, at seat G of row 4 (4G) had difficulty in donning his oxygen mask. Subsequently, she walked over to his seat and assisted him with his mask, as the flight crew had not done his PA at that time. The investigation found that he was travelling with his mother and sister who were seated at seats A and B of row 3 (3A and 3B), and the two seats adjacent to his seat (4E and 4F), were vacant.

According to their safety emergency procedures, the SCC was required to remain in her seat until the aircraft had reached a safer altitude and the PIC had made a PA for cabin crew to carry out their follow up duties, however she still assisted the child at seat 4G with his oxygen mask. Although this action was taken before the emergency descent, it is vital for the Cabin Crew to be secured in their seats during the emergency phase to ensure that they are safe in order to assist and care for passengers, post emergency.

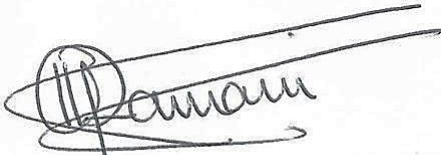
The investigation determined that had the child been seated next to an adult or closer to his family, the SCC would not feel obliged to leave her seat to assist the child during the emergency phase.

Recommendation number AIC 20-R32/19-2002 to Air Niugini Limited

The PNG Accident Investigation Commission recommends that Air Niugini Limited should ensure that passengers seating arrangement are managed prior to departure of each flight to ensure that passengers with special needs or minors flying unattended are able to receive assistance from adjacent passengers.

Action requested

The AIC requests that Air Niugini Limited note recommendation *AIC 20-R32/19-2002*, and provide a response to the AIC within 90 days of the issue date, and explain (including evidence) how Air Niugini Limited has addressed the safety deficiency identified in the safety recommendation.



Hubert Namani, LLB
Chief Commissioner

2 October 2020

Closing statement

Air Niugini Limited (ANL) provided a response to the recommendation *AIC 20-R32/19-2002*, and included evidence about the actions adopted by the operator to address the safety deficiency identified.

In its response, Air Niugini explained that:

The port staff failed to carry out procedures in ASM: 6.3.1 – Flight Editing. The procedure outlines all actions to be taken by the port staff before the flight is opened for check-in. In this case pre-seating of families was not done.

The Sabre Sonic Check-In System (SSCI) has the capability for group check-in and individual check-in for the system to seat passengers with the same surname and group bookings with one PNL to be seated side by side in the same seat row. The passengers (family) were checked in the system individually ex RAB by the traffic officer as per system records. From analysis of the flight documents, the mother was checked in first and the system allocated seat 3B in row three (3), which all the seats in row three (3) were occupied. The child was checked in after thus the system allocating the next closest vacant seat in row

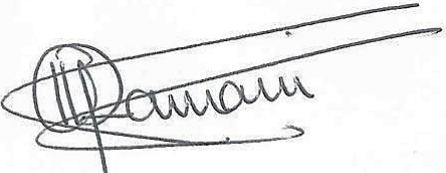
4 (4G) was allocated to the child when he was checked into the DCS system. With the individual check-in action, the system link was severed where the system allocated separate seats. In such cases, the check-in officer is required to check available seat rows and reallocate the family to be seated side by side in the same seat row which the officer failed to action.

On 17 February 2021, Air Niugini Limited amended the relevant parts of Sections 6.3.1 and Section 6.18.20 of the *Airport Services Manual* including requirements for:

- all flights to be available in the DCS system 72 hours prior to their schedule departure times and that each flight is to be edited,
- families with children and Group travel must be seated side by side in the same rows,
- clarification on the definitions of ‘infant’ and ‘child’,
- children must be seated side by side in the same rows with their parents or guardians for their safety observation,
- reference for unaccompanied minors handling procedures,
- revised section title to be specific to infants and children seating,
- emphasis on why children must be seated side by side on the same rows, with their parents or guardians, and
- clarification on the definition of a ‘child’ that must be seated on their own (not nursed).

A copy of the approved ASM version 15.2 was provided to the AIC (*Refer to attachments 1, 2 and 3 for relevant amendments, highlighted*).

According to AIC assessment, the corrective action adopted by Air Niugini Limited addresses the Safety deficiency and therefore, assigned a rating as *satisfactory* and recorded the **Status of the AIC recommendation: CLOSED RESPONSE ACCEPTED.**



Hubert Namani, LLB
Chief Commissioner

18 March 2021

6.3.1 Flight Editing

All flights are available in the DCS system 72 hours prior to their schedule departure times. Flights are to be edited before being opened for passenger check-in at least 24 hours prior to schedule departure time.

The format for editing shall be

- Pre-allocating seat numbers.
- Entering comments into passenger record as required for special handling.

Editing shall be completed for the following range of passengers:

1. VIP/VP/CIP/Executive Club members.
2. Family and common interest groups. Families with children and Group travel passengers must be seated side by side in the same seat rows.
3. Other passengers with differing surnames travelling together linked by a group indicator.
4. Special handling passengers, e.g. WCHR/UMNRs, etc.
5. Positioning Crew and other Air Niugini staff on duty travel.
6. Set Inventory Authorised Counts for any sector restrictions
7. Check seat plan in DCS is correct version according to aircraft type
8. check to ensure PNL is showing in the system
9. Other passengers as required.

The Duty Manager and/or Airport Supervisors (PNG Domestic) shall allocate staff to perform editing duties when compiling their daily worksheets and shall monitor to ensure tasks are completed satisfactorily.

All special handling passengers seating requirements must be observed as per each aircraft type. Refer to Ground Handling and Weight and Balance Manual for each aircraft type section: 4.2.1 – Customer Seating Information.

6.4 Service at Check-In

As it is essential that passenger processing and handling staff provide the best possible service, the following guidelines should be followed. Staff should:

1. Present a smart appearance by being properly uniformed
2. Smile pleasantly
3. Greet the passenger by name, obtained from flight coupon
4. Possess a sound knowledge of ticketing
5. Possess a sound knowledge of the travel regulations relating to the flight concerned.
6. Possess the ability to work fast and efficiently

Passenger Handling Procedures

Airport Services Manual



6.18.20 Infants and Children

Definitions:

Infant is a minor who has not yet reached his/her **second (2nd)** birthday, who is nursed and does not occupy a seat.

'Child' is a passenger who has reached his or her **second (2nd)** birthday but not his or her **twelfth (12th)** birthday. **Infant'** means a passenger who has not reached his or her **second (2nd)** birthday.

6.18.20.1 Carriage of Infants and Children Regulations

An infant may be carried in the arms or on the lap of an adult passenger or in a basinet. This is providing the basinet is restrained so as to prevent it from moving under the maximum accelerations to be expected in flight and in an emergency alighting. Precautions are to be taken to ensure that at the times seat belts are required to be worn, the infant will not be thrown from the basinet under these accelerations.

When an infant is carried in the arms or on the lap of a passenger in accordance with the above paragraph, the seat belt, when required to be worn, shall be fastened around the passenger carrying or nursing the infant, but not around the infant.

When an infant is carried in the arms or on the lap of a passenger in accordance with the above paragraph, or an aircraft engaged in charter or regular public transport operations, the name of the infant shall be bracketed on the passenger list with the name of the person carrying or nursing the infant."

Children who have reached their third (3rd) birthday must have a ticket, and are allocated a seat. Children must be seated side by side on the same seat rows with their parents or guardians. With circumstances where Unaccompanied Minors are travelling, must be allocated a seat in the forward cabin of the class of travel at an aisle seat next to an adult passenger. This safety procedure is to ensure that children are easily assisted by adult passengers and cabin crews should an emergency situation arise during a particular flight. Check-in agents must observe this procedure when processing passengers during check-in of passengers. Further Unaccompanied Minors handling requirements, refer to ASM 6.18.19 to 6.18.19.3.

Cabin Crews and Flight Crews are anxious to help Station Staff out of temporary difficulties wherever they can, and they do, but acting illegally as per CASA Regulations, they cannot condone.

Cabin Crews and Flight Crews are quite entitled to request correction of any situation they find out conforming to the regulations, and Station Staff should not put them in the position of having to refuse to allow the nursing of oversize children. Some of the requests recently have been to nurse children who fall outside of the Infant category by many years.

NOTE: Upon boarding the passenger will need to advise gate check officer of the baby stroller. Boarding officer must tag the stroller and hand to ramp officer than advice of weight to the load controller for weight and balance accountability.



6.18.20.2 Seating

The maximum number of infants allowed per aircraft is limited by the number of supplemental oxygen masks available on the aircraft. However, consideration can be given to include the number of infant life jackets and seat belts carried. Restrictions apply to one (1) infant per adult passenger.

An adult carrying and nursing an infant **MUST** never be seated in an emergency exit row. Children must occupy an individual passenger seat but **MUST** not be seated in emergency exit row **seats**. Their seat belts are to be securely fastened for the duration of the flight to ensure safety observations.

Children must be seated side by side on the same seat rows with their parents or guardians. With circumstances where Unaccompanied Minors are travelling, must be allocated a seat in the forward cabin of the class of travel at an aisle seat next to an adult passenger. This safety procedure is to ensure that children are easily assisted by adult passengers and cabin crews should an emergency situation arise during a particular flight. Check-in agents must observe this procedure when processing passengers during check-in of passengers.

Infant Bassinet is not provided on the aircraft. Bassinets carried on board by passengers must be stowed away and the infant nursed by the adult throughout the flight. Strollers are not allowed in aircraft cabin. It can be collapsed before boarding and loaded in cargo hold or check-in as baggage.

6.18.20.3 Child Nursing

Child Nursing on flights is deemed **ILLEGAL**.

The following instructions are for all staff to follow and adhere to:

- Children who have reached their **third (3rd)** birthday but not their **fifteenth (15th)** birthday **MUST** have a ticket and be allocated a seat to travel.
- To this end, under **NO** circumstances should that child be nursed. The child either travels on his/her own ticket or **NO TICKET – NO RIDE**. This is **NOT NEGOTIABLE**.

NOTE: All staff must follow this instruction, as this practice is against the Air Niugini Policy, and is not safe. Such practice can hinder emergency evacuation, leading at the worst case to loss of life.

Children have been nursed by their parents at the request of Station staff, some of them obviously too big to be comfortable

This is strictly against Air Niugini policy, and is an unsafe practice, as such a practice can hinder emergency evacuation leading, at the worst case, to loss of life, and therefore it is not allowed.