



Headoffice of AEI

Voltairtuint 4
2908 XJ Capelle a/d IJssel
The Netherlands
Tel: +31 345 851384
Tel: +31 10 2799801
Fax: +31 172 436959
Email: Secr_general@airengineers.org
or fredbruggeman@cs.com

Fred Bruggeman · Secretary General

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To: European & International
Strategy Civil Aviation
Authority Vice-Chairman
Mr Michael SMETHERS
CAA House
45-59 Kingsway
WC2B 6TE LONDON
United Kingdom

Subject: Safety Warning about Aircraft Operators Pilots not reporting system defects during the flight when they occur, but when it is convenient for the Operator.

Cc: All European Aviation Authorities

Dear Sir,

At our International congress last week in London, evidence was provided to us that a large number of Aircraft Operators and Airlines in Europe do not report, as required by regulation, a high percentage of system defects or equipment failures in their aircraft when they occur. These defects are only reported when it is convenient for the Operator, for example the last flight of the day, or where a flight terminates at an airport where maintenance assistance is readily available. Operators with very tight flight schedules and with short turn-around times (less than 40 minutes) are especially guilty of this practice, as even small technical problems can easily cause departure delays.

Evidence of this practice is found in notes from one Aircrew to the next stating deficiencies in a specific aircraft, however these deficiencies are not being written in the logbook. Reported defects in the inbound flight where the computer system (ACARS) when doing the system check on the defective system informs the Operator that not only during the last flight this problem occurred but also on the previous outbound flight, and the reporting of these defects, when away from home-base, would have caused the flight to be delayed.

When this information is provided to AEI, AEI to protect the Reporter from retribution is not in a position to provide evidence without the Reporter risking his or her job or future promotion within the Reporter's company.

However each National Aviation Authority has the ability to demand from Operators this information, this evidence could then be ascertained to discover the facts.

AEI therefore request that all the National Authorities carry out a quick survey of a number aircraft Technical Logbooks of the Airlines and operators under their jurisdiction to ascertain how many reported defects are reported on the last flight into home and not recorded randomly.

The laws of probability tells AEI that since system defects occur at random, many defects should therefore be randomly reported throughout the day of the aircraft routes.

If however this survey reveals that the majority of the technical reports are written on the last flight into a home base or into specific airports with technical support, this indicates to the authority that there is a reporting problem and further investigation may reveal that this reporting method is intentional. If for instance from 200 flights with 10 system defects are reported, the majority of these defects are written up during or after last flight of the day this may indicate a serious safety problem.

As this reporting issue is serious safety concern, AEI have produced a press release stating amongst other issues this reporting problem and AEI therefore requests a copy of this survey from your authority, and AEI will continue to do so until investigation proves AEI wrong or the problem is solved.

AEI will also raise this subject at our next meeting with the European Commission as well as through our meetings with EASA. AEI requests a written answer as to whether or not your Authority will carry out this inspection and if not, the reasons why. AEI also requests a copy of the results after the investigation.

AEI will follow this request closely through the AEI European Member organisations which are located in most European countries. If this survey is not undertaken and when the next incident or accident occurs in your country, and where a relationship can be found with regards to AEI's warning, AEI will request an explanation which will be published.

We appreciate you co-operation in this.

Yours sincerely,

Fred Bruggeman
AEI Secretary General