EASA issues safety information bulletin

It was reported on 9th June that with regard to the ongoing accident investigation into the loss of Air France flight AF 447, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), in its capacity as certification authority for aircraft type designed in the EASA Member States (EU + Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein), confirmed that it had at all times been fully informed by the responsible accident investigation body, BEA France.

The Agency, in its statement, wished to underline that, according to BEA, the causes of the accident are still unknown. It has confirmed that the Airbus A330 type and all other Airbus aircraft types are airworthy and safe to operate. As precautionary measure, the Agency issued a safety information bulletin, reminding operators of existing procedures to be applied in the event of loss of, or unreliable, speed indication.

With regard to reports about a possible malfunctioning of the air speed indication system (pitot tubes), the Agency is analysing data with a view to issuing mandatory corrective action, without prejudging the outcome of the accident investigation.

The Agency’s measures are published on the EASA Web site: www.easa.eu.int. Click on Safety Information Bulletins, SIB No 2009 – 17, which is also reproduced below:

Unreliable Airspeed indication

Background:
During the recent accident of an A330 into the Atlantic Ocean on 1st June 2009, and without prejudging the final outcome of the investigation, a discrepancy between the different measured airspeeds was reported. There have been a number of occurrences of unreliable airspeed indications or misleading air data information. The root cause of this may be due to, but is not limited to, inappropriate maintenance, contamination by small objects or materials on the ground or in the air, extreme environmental conditions producing icing outside the certification envelope of the probes or large amount of water ingestion.

Description:
The primary purpose of the pitot-static system is to provide the flight crew with airspeed information, required to safely control
the aircraft. As noted above, the origins of potential pitot-static system malfunctions are numerous and cannot be totally excluded in the operational context. The Aircraft Flight Manuals and/or Flight Crew Operating Manuals include procedures for unreliable airspeed indication (Air data system misleading information) and these should be well known by flight crews. Correct application of these procedures by flight crews may be crucial for assuring the safety of the aircraft when such Pitot-static malfunctions occur.

**Recommendations:**
Operators should ensure that flight crews have proper knowledge and proficiency:
(i) To detect and to identify unreliable airspeed indication.

(ii) To apply immediate and conservative actions for ensuring short term safe flight control, in accordance with the manufacturer procedures developed for the specific aircraft; the use of memory items should be considered. And

(iii) To apply procedures for the safe continuation of a flight with unreliable airspeed indication up to a safe landing.

This is information only. Recommendations are not mandatory.

Familiarisation of flight crews with unreliable airspeed indication procedures should be provided through adequate training. Flight crew knowledge and proficiency should be checked on a regular basis.

**Applicability:** All aeroplanes operating in commercial air transport.

**Contact:** For further information contact the Airworthiness Directives, Safety Management & Research Section, Certification Directorate, EASA. E-mail: ADs@easa.europa.eu.

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The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) was set up by the EU in 2003 to promote the highest common standards of safety and environmental protection in civil aviation. Based in Cologne, the Agency currently employs nearly 500 experts and administrators from all over Europe.