

NOTICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

N 8900.311

National Policy

Effective Date:
7/22/15

Cancellation Date:
7/22/16

SUBJ: Flight Management Computer Setup and Approach Briefings

1. Purpose of This Notice. This notice provides guidance for principal operations inspectors (POI) to ensure their operators understand the importance of setting up flight management computers (FMC) correctly to include the consequences of possible vertical guidance misrepresentation with route discontinuities. This notice advises POIs to ensure their operators have procedures in place for re-briefing an approach should any changes occur.

2. Audience. The primary audience for this notice is Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) and certificate management office (CMO) POIs who are responsible for the acceptance of developed procedures operating under Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) parts 121, 125 (including part 125 Letter of Deviation Authority (LODA) holders), 135, and part 91 subpart K. The secondary audience includes Flight Standards (AFS) branches and divisions in the regions and in headquarters (HQ).

3. Where You Can Find This Notice. You can find this notice on the MyFAA employee Web site at https://employees.faa.gov/tools_resources/orders_notices. Inspectors can access this notice through the Flight Standards Information Management System (FSIMS) at <http://fsims.avs.faa.gov>. Operators can find this notice on the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Web site at <http://fsims.faa.gov>. This notice is available to the public at http://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/orders_notices.

4. Background. In August 2013, an accident occurred involving an Airbus A300 that crashed short of the runway during a Localizer (LOC) nonprecision approach. As a result of its investigation of the accident, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued safety recommendations to the FAA. This notice is AFS' response to three of those recommendations. The NTSB safety recommendations were to ensure that operators have procedures in place within their manuals to address the criticality of setting up the FMC correctly, re-brief approaches after changes are made, and convey information about an incorrectly programmed flight management system (FMS) when vertical deviation guidance is used.

5. Discussion. The flightcrew of this accident failed to properly configure and verify the FMC for the profile approach. The FMC did not capture the vertical profile, most likely due to the route discontinuity. It is important to note, when conducting an approach with a vertical descent profile, any improper waypoints or route discontinuities could disrupt that vertical path and present misleading information. The Pilot Flying (PF) did not ask the Pilot Monitoring (PM) to verify that the flight plan was properly sequenced for the approach. Additionally, when the PF

changed the method of descent from profile to Vertical Speed (VS) mode, the PM was not briefed on the change; as a result, the PM was unprepared for a VS descent due to reduced situational awareness. It is critical to flight safety that consistent FAA-approved training, along with regular FAA surveillance of the training, in combination with the review and evaluation of fundamental procedures be completed.

6. Action.

a. POIs will verify that procedures are in place, within their operators' FAA-approved or accepted manuals, which address the criticality of setting up the approach in the FMC correctly.

b. POIs will work with their operators to ensure that operators have procedures that explicitly state that any changes to an approach after the initial briefing should be re-briefed in accordance with accepted crew briefing procedure. Last-minute runway or approach changes should be accepted only if pre-briefed as a backup to the planned approach. The PM should update the FMC to reflect an approach change, and verify with the PF that the new approach is properly set up in the aircraft. If time does not allow for re-brief and verification of proper FMC/cockpit setup, the flightcrew should ask for extended vectors or holding until briefing/setup can be accomplished.

c. POIs will also work with their operators to develop information about how the FMS could provide an incorrect presentation in the lateral and/or vertical profiles if waypoints are incorrectly entered, or a route discontinuity exists that is not corrected before conducting an approach.

7. Reference (current edition). Advisory Circular (AC) 120-71, Standard Operating Procedures for Flight Deck Crewmembers.

8. Disposition. We will incorporate the information in this notice into Order 8900.1, Volume 4, Chapter 6, Section 1 before this notice expires. Direct questions or comments concerning this notice to the Air Carrier Operations Branch (AFS-220) at 202-267-8166.

ORIGINAL SIGNED by

/s/ John Barbagallo
Deputy Director, Flight Standards Service