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Safety recommendation: *AIC 20-R35/20-1005*

Addressed to: NiuSky Limited (Formerly PNG Air Services Limited)

Date issued: 01 October 2020

Investigation link: AIC 20-1005

Action status: **Closed**

Introduction

At around 18:00 Local (08:00 UTC) on 26 July 2020, the Papua New Guinea Accident Investigation Commission (AIC) became aware of an alleged aircraft occurrence near Papa-Lealea, Central Province.

The AIC subsequently contacted Papua New Guinea Air Services Limited (ASL) and was informed by ASL that all aircraft in PNG airspace were accounted for. However, ASL advised AIC that they received an Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) distress signal and provided the ELT distress coordinates to the AIC. The AIC determined that the location of the alleged aircraft occurrence site was about 16 nm North West of Port Moresby.

Occurrence

On 26 July 2020, at 12:46 local time, a Cessna 402C aircraft, registered VH-TSI collided with trees during an aborted take-off at an uncommissioned field near Papa-Lealea, about 16 nm North West of Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

During the approach to land, the aircraft's outboard section of the left wing was initially clipped by a tree and separated from the aircraft. The aircraft continued on to land.

The Pilot in Command, was the sole occupant of the aircraft and suffered minor injuries.

Safety deficiency description

The implementation and operation of search and rescue (SAR) coordination procedures alongside with adequate training for SAR coordination officers can effectively manage distress situations in a timely manner. NiuSky Ltd (formerly known as PNGASL) has been in the process of applying for a Part 176 Search and Rescue Operation (SARO) Certification and Operation.

According to CASA records:

- *The SAR Service Organisation Exposition Initial Draft which is an integral part of the 5-phase certification process was submitted by NiuSkys' RCC Coordinator to CASA for assessment and acceptance in mid-June 2020. The draft received was less than 5% complete. The full certification process is yet to be completed and this exposition documentation assessment and review is phase 2 of the process which usually takes months to complete (depending on the applicant's pro-activeness).*
- *It was also noted that the RCC Coordinator resigned from NiuSky Pacific Ltd on 26 June 2020. The Manager Jacksons Operations and the Executive Manager-ATS were named to take over from the resigned RCC coordinator. However, no further update has been received since the RCC coordinator resignation.*

The investigation found that NiuSky Ltd does not have a Part 176 SARO Certification. Acquisition of a Part 176 certification would allow SAR coordination to be effective through implementation of procedures and adequate training for staff.

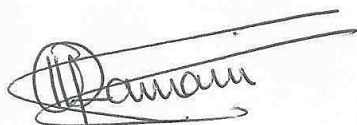
The investigation also found that ATS staff are not adequately trained in interpreting distress signals from aircraft in distress. Although not directly related to an occurrence, interpretation of a distress signal can ensure timely coordination of SAR activities and are managed efficiently.

Recommendation number AIC 20-R35/20-1005 to PNG Air Services Limited

The PNG Accident Investigation Commission (AIC) recommends that NiuSky Pacific Limited (formerly PNGASL) should implement effective procedures to ensure the effective management of signals transmitted by aircraft in distress including but not limited to ELT and, when appropriate, the effective coordination of Search and Rescue operations, in accordance with applicable international standards and national regulations.

Action requested

The Accident Investigation Commission requests that NiuSky Pacific Limited note recommendation AIC 20-R35/20-1005, and provide a response to the PNG AIC within 90 days, but no later than **23 December 2020**, and explain including with evidence how NiuSky Pacific Limited has addressed the safety deficiency identified in Safety Recommendation AIC 20-R35/20-1005.



HUBERT NAMANI, LLB

Chief Commissioner

1 October 2020.

Closing statement

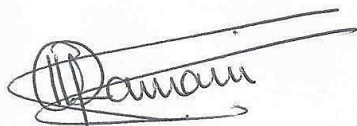
On 6 October 2020, NiuSky Pacific Limited provided a response to AIC safety recommendation AIC 20-R35/20-1005, explaining that Air Traffic Services (ATS) and Rescue Co-ordination Centre (RCC) manuals already *contained adequate procedures in terms of managing signals transmitted by aircraft in distress*. NiuSky Pacific Limited also stated that *Senior ATS staff, who generally man positions at which the SRSAT alerts are received, are very familiar with them and well versed in their management*.

The response from NiuSky Pacific Limited finalized with a paragraph indicating that *commensurate with the significant upgrades to Air Traffic Management and related systems, the operational procedures are in the process of a full review and rewrite as appropriate. The RCC section will also be included in this process with the view to ensuring future management of these events is in line with the capabilities of the new systems*.

The response did not include information or evidence of safety actions adopted as a result of the safety recommendation AIC 20-R35/20-1005. It was noticed that the process of review and rewrite of the operational procedures they referred is in the context of a planned upgrade of organisational capabilities, not oriented to adopt safety actions resulting from the safety deficiencies identified in AIC safety recommendation.

According to AIC assessment, NiuSky Pacific Limited response does not address the safety issues identified during the investigation and the safety deficiencies identified will remain until other effective safety actions are developed in the future. The AIC may re-assess the safety recommendation in the future if evidence of implementation of effective safety actions adopted as a result of safety recommendation AIC 20-R35/20-1005 is provided by NiuSky Pacific Limited.

Therefore, the AIC assigned NiuSky Pacific Limited response as *unsatisfactory* and recorded the **Status of the AIC recommendation: CLOSED RESPONSE NOT ACCEPTED**



HUBERT NAMANI, LLB

Chief Commissioner

7 October 2020.