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Safety recommendation: AIC 20-R6/19-1002

Addressed to: Ramu Agriculture Industries Limited (RAIL)

Date issued: 12 August 2020

Investigation link: AIC 19-1002

Action status: Active

Introduction

On 29 August 2019, Papua New Guinea Air Services Limited (ASL) notified the Papua New Guinea Accident Investigation Commission (AIC) of the accident referenced in this safety recommendation.

The AIC dispatched a team of investigators to the area on the morning of 30th August 2019 and immediately commenced an on-site investigation and interviewing of the locals.

The PNG AIC has identified a significant safety deficiency, which if not rectified could result pilots not being appropriately guided in accordance with *PNG CAR Part 91* when planning for flights. This could contribute to an accident or serious incident.

Occurrence

On 29 August 2019, sometime between 00:11 UTC¹ and 01:45 UTC, an Air Tractor AT-502B aircraft, registered P2-SET, operated by Ramu-Agriculture Industries was conducting a VFR ferry flight from Daru, Western Province to Gusap, Madang Province, when it impacted a tree near Era river about 6.8 nautical miles North-West of Baimuru airstrip, Gulf Province.

The aircraft initially impacted palm trees clipping its right outboard wing section. The aircraft travelled Another 1.3 nautical miles before impacting a tall thick tree. The forward fuselage section which also has the hopper, main landing gear, engine and propeller attached to it separated on impact and travelled another 290 meters before being embedded in mud. Both wings separated from the aircraft on impact and came to rest about 10 meters away from the main wreckage.

The Pilot in Command, the sole occupant of the aircraft suffered fatal injuries.

Safety deficiency description

RAIL SOP manual provides guidance to company pilots when conducting VFR flights. However, *RAIL SOP* manual does not contain specific information pertaining to weather minima under the Visual Flight Rules (VFR) as per *PNG CAR Part 91.301-VFR Meteorological minima*.

PNG CAR Part 91.301 states:

(a) Except as provided in rule 91.303 and paragraphs (b) and (c), a pilot-in-command must not operate an aircraft under VFR—

¹ The 24-hour clock, in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), is used in this report to describe the local time as specific events occurred. Local time in the area of the accident, Pacific/ Port Moresby Time is UTC + 10 hours.

- (1) when the flight visibility is less than that prescribed for the corresponding class of airspace in Table 4; or
- (2) at a distance from clouds that is less than that prescribed for the corresponding class of airspace in Table 4; or
- (3) more than 5 nm from the aerodrome of departure at night.
- (b) Except as provided in rule 91.303, a pilot-in-command must not take-off or land an aircraft, or fly in the vicinity of an aerodrome, under VFR when the flight visibility, or the cloud ceiling, is less than—
 - (1) at aerodromes within a control zone that prescribed in Table 5; and
 - (2) at aerodromes within an aerodrome traffic zone or in uncontrolled airspace, that prescribed in Table 6.
- (c) A pilot-in-command of—
 - (1) an aircraft may operate in Class F airspace over areas with terrain rising to more than 5000 feet AMSL clear of cloud and in sight of the surface and with a flight visibility of not less than 5 km;
 - (2) a helicopter may operate in Class F airspace with a flight visibility of less than 5 km if manoeuvred at a speed that gives adequate opportunity to observe other traffic or any obstructions in order to avoid collisions; and
 - (3) an aircraft performing agricultural aircraft operations, may operate in Class F airspace with a flight visibility of less than 5 km but not less than 1500 m.

RAIL provides guidance to company pilots with respect to operational requirements to ensure the safety of its flight operations are maintained.

RAIL SOP manual, section 3.1 - **Company Policy** states:

- (1) The object of this Section of the Operations Manual is to reflect Company policy and outline the operational requirements, procedures and general principles by which RAMU AGRI INDUSTRIES LIMITED aims to achieve and maintain a level of standardisation that will ensure maximum safety and efficiency of its flight operations.

The AIC investigation found that RAIL SOP does not contain **VFR meteorological minima** with respect to phases of flight as guidance to pilots during its flight operations. The imperative inclusion of meteorological minimas with respect to instructions for compliance with *CAR Part 91.301* would ensure the importance of taking vital and immediate safety action, during its flight operations.

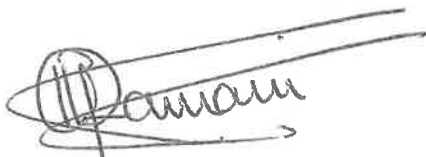
Recommendation number AIC 20-R6/19-1002 to Ramu Agriculture Industries Limited

The PNG Accident Investigation Commission recommends that Ramu Agriculture Limited, should ensure that:

Section 3 of the Standards Operating Procedures Manual is amended to include a sub-section that provides guidance to pilots pertaining to VFR meteorological minima to ensure pilots are provided with the standards as per *CAR Part 91.301* that will ensure **essential flight crew actions during planning**.

Action requested

The Accident Investigation Commission requests that Ramu Agriculture Limited note recommendation AIC 20-R6/19-1002, and provide a response to the PNG AIC within 90 days, but no later than 10 November 2020, and explain including with evidence how Ramu Agriculture Limited has addressed the safety deficiency identified in *Safety Recommendation AIC 20-R6/19-1002*



Hubert Namani, LLB
Chief Commissioner

12 August 2020.

Ramu Agriculture Industries Limited response to Safety Recommendation AIC 20-R6/19-1002

The AIC did not receive a response from Ramu Agriculture Industries Limited (RAIL) within the provided 90 days period.

The AIC made courtesy follow ups on the recommendation on 28 April 2023 and 1 May 2023. No response was received from RAIL for respective follow ups.

On 2 May 2023, following another courtesy follow up by AIC, RAIL provided their response to *Safety Recommendation AIC 20-R6/19-1002*, advising that they would provide evidence of their corrective actions.

On 12 May 2023, RAIL provided evidence of their corrective action which included *pages 3-29 and 3-30 of RAIL's Operations Manual (Standard Operating Procedures), Issue 2, 10 Nov 2020*. The pages contained *Section 3.29 VFR Weather Minima* procedure.

PNG Accident Investigation Commission assessment

The AIC assessed the Ramu Agriculture Industries Limited (RAIL) response and notes that corrective actions taken have addressed the safety deficiencies identified in *Safety Recommendation AIC 20-R6/19-1002*.

The AIC assigned this response as *fully satisfactory* rating.

The AIC recorded the **Status of the AIC Recommendation: CLOSED**



Capt. Aria Bouraga, MBE
Acting Chief Commissioner

12 May 2023