

08PRL10

IFALPA says that Sao Paulo overrun once again underlines the need for RESAs that meet ICAO's minimum recommendation

CHERTSEY 18 July: Yesterday's tragic accident at Sao Paulo Congonhas Airport (SBSP) demonstrates once again the need for Runway End Safety Areas (RESA) to be established at airports with airline operations. The International Federation of Airline Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) has been warning of the dangers of insufficient runway overrun areas for more than 20 years, arguing that runways at airports with airline operations should have, as a minimum, a RESA 240 metres long by at least twice the runway width delivering a total safety area of 300m to allow for overruns and also ease access for rescue and fire fighting equipment. When the surroundings of Congonhas Airport are taken into consideration it is clear that what is required is an enhanced RESA rather than one which is only marginally compliant with ICAO standards at best.

At some airports, Congonhas Airport being a prime example, the restrictions of the airport's surrounding topography will not allow a sufficient RESA. In this event, IFALPA argues that an arrestor bed such as an engineered materials arrestor system (EMAS) be installed to provide a similar or better level of safety to a 300m RESA. At airports where they have been installed EMAS have proven that they provide an effective means of bringing an overrunning aircraft to a halt. Clearly this would significantly improve passenger and crew safety.

The Federation would like to stress that it would be an error to focus on Brazil as being in any way alone in failing to meet with ICAO recommendations for RESAs. This is a world wide problem with thousands of runways used in airline operations failing to comply with the recommendations set out in ICAO Annex I4 which sets out standards and recommendations for airports. Since the one of the most common types of accident in airline operations is the runway excursion event, with an average of just under four a month (indeed there have been three such events in the last week alone), it is of vital importance that either 240m RESAs are established or EMAS alternatives that deliver a similar level safety are installed.

Naturally, IFALPA does not comment on individual accidents while the investigation into their cause is underway. As such, IFALPA will not comment on the specifics of this accident other than to offer its condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the accident and its sympathy and wishes for a speedy recovery to those injured in the accident.

Notes to Editors

The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations represents in excess of 100,000 pilots in more than 95 countries world-wide. The mission of IFALPA is to be the global voice of airline pilots, promoting the highest level of aviation safety and security world-wide and providing services, support and representation to all of its Member Associations. See the Federation website www.ifalpa.org

For more information contact Gideon Ewers, IFALPA Media Communications Officer +44 1932 579041 or on gideonewers@ifalpa.org