



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594
Safety Recommendation

1983-D
1987-D

Date: June 15, 1987

In reply refer to: A-87-70

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Recently, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) sent queries to representatives of several of its member States requesting followup comments on a proposal of March 4, 1984. This proposal had suggested discontinuing the use of the overseas position report headings "AIREP" and "AIREP SPECIAL" and the telegraphy contractions "ARP" and "ARS," as promulgated in the ICAO Procedures for Navigation Services, Rules of the Air and Air Traffic Services, based upon disuse. The National Transportation Safety Board investigated the system and found that the headings in fact are not used in overseas communications in U.S.-controlled oceanic airspace, nor apparently is there a means for the system to accept them. However, the Safety Board feels that use of the headings could be revived and would enhance the utility of in-flight weather reports.

The AIREP system is a principal source of aviation weather information over oceanic areas and often is the only source of information about weather conditions hazardous to aircraft operators, such as severe turbulence and severe icing. At present, about the only way to distinguish AIREP SPECIALs from AIREPs is by the visual inspection of the reports which, considering the thousands of reports received daily, is almost an impossible task.

The Safety Board has expressed to the Interagency Group for International Aviation (IGIA) its opinion that the use of headings to designate special weather reports should be continued and expects this opinion to be forwarded to ICAO as the U.S. position on the proposed discontinuation. However, simply agreeing that a seldom used system be continued as a procedure will not encourage its use. The system must be improved so that weather information will be easier to retrieve and disseminate. To that end, the Safety Board believes that AIREP SPECIAL reports should be tagged so that they can be readily recognized either by visual inspection or by computer program. This will allow National Weather Service and military weather forecasters, Federal Aviation Administration flight service specialists, and airline dispatchers to use the information readily in preparing warnings to aircraft transiting the region of severe weather.

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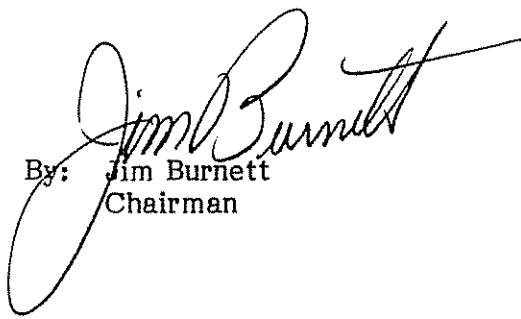
To work toward the goal of using existing ICAO procedures to identify hazardous weather conditions in overseas aviation reports, the Safety Board is sending safety recommendations to the Air Transport Association of America, the International Air Transport Association, the U.S. Air Force, and the U.S. Navy requesting that associated flightcrews and aircrews use the ICAO headings "AIREP," "AIREP SPECIAL," and the contractions "ARP" and "ARS," respectively, when reporting routine and hazardous weather conditions en route.

Therefore, to provide for the timely identification and use of reports of hazardous weather conditions on global routes, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that Aeronautical Radio Incorporated:

Develop a coding system to identify those international weather reports that are received with the headings "AIREP SPECIAL" or "ARS" for further transmission to the users of pilot weather reports. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-87-70)

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility "... to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations and would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation A-87-70 in your reply.

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and NALL and LAUBER, Members, concurred in this recommendation.


By: Jim Burnett
Chairman