

Investigation reports on two incidents involving pilot incapacitation published

The Air Accident Investigation Authority (AAIA) today (August 23) published the investigation reports (7/2023 and 8/2023) on the investigations into two incidents on January 26 and February 21, 2019, in which the captains were incapacitated from performing pilot monitoring duties during flights.

The occurrence involved a Boeing 777-367 passenger aircraft flying from Sapporo, Japan, to Hong Kong and an Airbus A350-941 aircraft flying from Perth, Australia, to Hong Kong. Both were Cathay Pacific flights. Noting loss of visual acuity, the two captains subsequently declared incapacitation in flight and relinquished the control of the aircraft to their first officers. Single pilot operation was carried out by the first officers for approach and landing. At last, both aircraft landed safely at Hong Kong International Airport and the captains were taken to the hospital for medical treatment.

The investigation reports concluded that the captain in the first incident had experienced a sudden loss of visual acuity while the one in the other incident had experienced difficulty in breathing, a loss of visual acuity, dizziness, headache, and chest pain. Their conditions deteriorated further to the extent that they were unable to perform their duties. After analysing the operations of these flights and reviewing the operator's standard operating procedures, guidelines and training in pilot incapacitation as well as the crew's contingency responses, the investigation team deemed it unnecessary to propose any safety recommendation.

The investigations were conducted by a team of professional investigators in strict adherence to international standards established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). "The objective of the investigations was to identify the circumstances and causes of the incidents with a view to preventing a recurrence," an AAIA spokesperson said.

Throughout the investigations, all parties concerned were properly consulted on the reports. The reports are available for download on the AAIA webpage (www.tlb.gov.hk/aaia/eng/investigation_reports/index.html).

The AAIA is an independent investigation authority responsible for the investigation of civil aircraft accidents and incidents in accordance with the Hong Kong Civil Aviation (Investigation of Accidents) Regulations (Cap. 448B) and with reference to the ICAO's standards.