

# [News story: Vacancy: Inspector of Air Accidents \(Human Factors\)](#)

Can you develop the human factors capability within the AAIB? This is a challenging and evolving field of work. The AAIB is recruiting its first Inspector of Air Accidents (Human Factors), and we'd like to hear from you.

As an integral part of the multi-disciplinary team, the Inspector (Human Factors) will be involved from the outset of an accident or serious incident investigation. You will review preliminary data to determine the level of human performance expertise required, and your remit will include managing specialists throughout an investigation, interviewing witnesses, writing detailed reports, identifying safety issues, drafting safety recommendations and giving evidence in court.

A full job description and role profile is on the [Civil Service Jobs website](#).

Read more about human factors in air accident investigations in the short article below.

The deadline for applications is 4 October 2017.

## **Lisa Fitzsimons, Senior Inspector of Air Accident (Engineering)**

As an AAIB Engineering Inspector no two days are ever the same. I may find myself working on an accident site documenting the wreckage and collecting evidence, overseeing component testing in a manufacturer's facility or project-managing a team of international specialists. Fundamentally the engineering aspects of an air accident investigation are aimed at trying to understand whether the aircraft or its systems played any part in the accident, and equally whether the manner in which the aircraft was designed, tested, certified or maintained may have played a role.

As an Engineering Inspector, my job is as much about trying to understand the human contribution to an accident or incident as it is about trying to understand the hardware contribution. It is a common misconception to think that the human involvement in an accident lies only with the pilots, those who happen to be in the 'driving' seat at the time of the accident. As investigators we need to look at all the human interactions and organisational influences that may have contributed to an accident, whether those be in the immediate lead-up to an accident or further back in time. When examining these issues as investigators we have the gift of hindsight, which is not something those involved at the time of an accident possess. It is therefore vital that rather than looking back and scrutinising someone's actions and trying to understand them based on what we now know, we instead put ourselves in their shoes, try to understand how the situation unfolded in their eyes and what information they had available to them. In that way we can attempt to work out why their thoughts, actions and behaviours may have made perfect sense to them at the time. Gaining proper insight into these

issues allows us to identify the areas that will deliver the most meaningful safety improvements. And of course, it is also equally important to understand what went right as well as what went wrong, what safety features worked as intended or what human interventions may have prevented the outcome from being even worse.

Truly getting to grips with the human aspects of an air accident is an integral part of the AAIB's role and the AAIB is constantly enhancing its capability in these areas. Recruitment of a specialist Human Factors Inspector is an important step on this journey, and the successful candidate will have a real opportunity to influence and shape this evolving capability.

If you think you could make a positive contribution to the work of the AAIB in the field of Human Factors, please read on.

### **Emma Truswell, Inspector of Air Accident (Operations)**

As a new AAIB Operations Inspector, I quickly noticed the amount of variety in the job. Every week is filled with new learning experiences and interesting challenges. It provides a tremendous opportunity to develop a broad range of skills and knowledge, and to apply them to important real-life events. The most rewarding aspect for me is knowing that I am part of something meaningful and just. On one level we can be finding answers for bereaved families during the most difficult time in their lives, and on another we are helping to improve international flight safety.

A core part of the job is deploying to the scenes of accidents and serious incidents. A roster shows who is available for call-out any time of the day or night, and any day of the year. Once called, you could be sent anywhere in the world, so you need to have your kit ready. Time is of the essence to get to the site and start evidence collection.

Having been deployed a number of times already, it is clear that every occurrence is unique. You may be dealing with a light aircraft accident on remote terrain, or it could be a serious incident involving an airliner at a major airport. The site can be distressing, and the pace dramatic. With all kinds of people and agencies present, it is a case of prioritising and using people skills to manage the site, and be efficient in your work.

You can be away for a few days during the field phase, and then it's back to the Branch to begin the post-field and analysis phase. This phase is full of twists and turns as you delve deeper in to the circumstances of an accident – trying to figure out the key factors and, crucially, what safety lessons can be learned by the wider industry. You may be dealing with anyone from eye-witnesses and flight crew, to operators and regulators – travelling all over to find answers and learn more. At the end of an investigation, the team produces a report to broadcast the safety message, with the aim of preventing re-occurrence. Sometimes it is also necessary to give evidence in court.

A positive aspect of the job is the continual scope for training and development. From remote terrain awareness and off-road driving training courses; to attending interesting conferences and manufacturer visits; to the

opportunity to gain or maintain your pilot's licence – this job represents an amazing opportunity to challenge yourself.

If you are a motivated and inquisitive person, who is passionate about improving flight safety as part of a well-established team, then grab this opportunity with both hands. Even after the short time I have been here I feel a real sense of fulfilment at the AAIB.