

Extension of Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) Duration

Background

Some recent reports of accident investigations have included recommendations that the CVR recording duration should be extended. This was due to the fact that, following the accident or serious incident, CVR data had been overwritten and relevant information was not available to the investigation. In response to these recommendations, the industry has stated its capability to produce recorders of 25 hours duration.

Position

IFALPA acknowledges the contribution of CVRs to accident and serious incident investigation, conducted by the relevant State Investigation Authorities in accordance with ICAO Annex 13; these investigations have been the foundation to build aviation safety to its present high level.

Annex 13 clearly states that, following an accident, CVR recordings and transcripts should not be made available to any person outside the investigation at any time either during the investigation or after it is completed. If pertinent to the analysis of the accident, a carefully worded summary of the CVR transcript may be made available as part of the final report.

IFALPA also believes that CVR recordings and transcripts are not related to Safety Management activities and processes, and should not be used for this purpose.

There have been multiple examples of misuse of such recordings, which end up published in the media or as evidence in litigation cases. Clearly, this is against the above ICAO provisions.

Any increase in CVR duration results in exposing the flight crew to an increased risk of misuse. IFALPA therefore believes that the information contained in the CVR should be limited to recording the current sector only, and considers that a performance-based duration is a much better option than any arbitrary number of hours of recording time.