



ICAO URGES DELAY IN COMPULSORY AIRLINER TRACKING

News / Airlines



Global aviation regulators are urged to **delay** by two years plans to require automated tracking of passenger planes to avoid a repeat of the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 in 2014, according to an **ICAO** report.

The plan to require all aircraft flying in remote areas to report their position every 15 minutes is the first stage in a broader plan under discussion at the ICAO.

The deadline was originally November 2016 but an advisory group to ICAO has recommended a delay to November 2018 to give carriers more time to implement it, according to the September 1 report.

The group also recommended that ICAO consider requiring automated tracking systems. When the 15-minute plan was first proposed, ICAO said the small number of long-haul aircraft that do not have tracking equipment on board would have the option of reporting their position over radio, which meant no airline would be required to retrofit their planes.

But the advisory group, called the Normal Aircraft Tracking Implementation Initiative (NATII) said manual reports could distract pilots, causing safety problems, and might not be accurate. It made the recommendations after consulting with airlines that fly in remote areas and running a "table top exercise" to test tracking procedures.

An ICAO insider said several nations had also expressed concerns that the 2016 deadline was too soon because of the planning and training that would be needed.

Other aviation sources have said airlines are baulking at the 2016 deadline, in part because of the cost, fearing that any rapid decisions could be overtaken by new technology.

ICAO has called the 15-minute position-reporting rule a "foundational" standard that could be put in place quickly while it develops more stringent tracking standards.

The European Union is pursuing more stringent plans. The European Aviation Safety Agency is leaning toward a three-minute interval, sources say.

Each extra minute can significantly affect the search area in the event of a crash over water or remote areas.

In 2009, an Air France jet - whose maintenance systems were reporting its position every 10 minutes - disappeared in the South Atlantic, leaving investigators a 17,000-square-km (6,600-square-mile) area to look for the jet. Its main wreckage was found after two years.

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