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GUIDELINES FOR AERONAUTICAL METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE PROVIDER (AMSP) DURING THE CORONA VIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC

This AIC A31/20 is promulgated for information, guidance and necessary action.

1 PURPOSE

This Aeronautical Information Circular (AIC) provides guidance to assist the aeronautical meteorological service provider (AMSP) already impacted by the Corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic.

These guidelines are not exhaustive and may be modified or complemented from time to time. In addition, the guidelines are non-regulatory in nature, meaning that the Meteorological Authority takes responsibility to decide how they might respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.1 BACKGROUND

On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

On 22 March 2020, H.E President of Uganda announced the closure of Entebbe International Airport to all commercial flights except for Emergencies, Cargo and Over-flights. The government also instituted restrictions or 'locks downs' of the general population and announced other public health protection measures to prevent or otherwise reduce the spread of COVID-19.

1.2 THE NATIONAL OBLIGATIONS OF UNMA

The Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA) is responsible for provision of meteorological facilities and services to support air navigation in accordance with the Civil Aviation Act as amended, the UNMA Act, 2012 and the Civil Aviation (Meteorological Services for Air Navigation) Regulations, 2020.

1.3 CONTINGENCY MEASURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY UNMA

The following measures are intended to provide a non-exhaustive illustration on how the meteorological authority may respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. These contingency measures are intended to protect the health and well-being of staff while at the same time preserving the basic level of meteorological service for air navigation in accordance with the national regulatory requirements.

1.3.1 Adjustments to service requirements

Since at the moment international and domestic flights in Uganda are limited to Emergencies, Cargo and Over-flights, it is essential that UNMA continues to fulfill their international civil aviation obligations as directed by the national regulatory framework in consultation with the Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP) and Aviation users.

1.3.2 Adjustments to working practices

The COVID-19 virus is mainly spread by humans through close body contact and by small droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. Humans may also become infected by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their face. There is currently no vaccine or antiviral treatment for COVID-19. The Meteorological authority should plan for and implement adjustments to working practices that may be short-term (spanning several weeks) or long-term (spanning several months or potentially longer) with emphasis on social/physical distancing.

1.3.3 Repositioning of teams and reallocation of duties/tasks

In accordance with the Presidential directive of March 2020, UNMA is required to implement ‘social distancing’ measures within the workplace environment, including observing stations and forecast production offices, to ensure the appropriate and necessary separation of duty personnel. Such social distancing measures include individuals or teams working across well-separated workstations or workspaces, sometimes in different parts of the building or even in different parts of the country where facilities allow.

1.3.4 Remote-working, including for forecast production

In regard to the repositioning of individuals or teams in the meteorological offices to ensure social distancing and maintaining business continuity, UNMA may facilitate and enable some of the operational staff and other personnel to perform their duties/tasks away from their normal duty station, including working remotely from home/their place of residence. This may be feasible where technology and other resources allow, including appropriate computer hardware and software with network connectivity between duty station and the remote locations.

1.3.5 Other considerations

Other aspects that UNMA may consider during the pandemic may include:

- a) Access to online training courses or other educational resources to maintain the competency and qualifications of operational personnel on duty;
- b) Distribution of personal protective equipment (or PPE) for work-related occupational health and safety and;
- c) Access to counseling and health services to support well-being of staff members.

The measures above shall be applicable from 1st March 2020 to 31st October 2020 unless otherwise communicated by the Authority.

1.4 MAINTENANCE AND CALIBRATION OF METEOROLOGICAL EQUIPMENT

1.4.1 Meteorological equipment and facilities used to generate data and information for air navigation services are subject to the requirements of the Civil Aviation (Meteorological Services for Air Navigation) Regulations 2020.

1.4.2 The meteorological equipment and facilities are subject to periodic checks, maintenance and calibration.

1.4.3 Deviations from the routine checks, maintenance and calibration beyond the allowable time window due to the COVID 19 pandemic shall only be undertaken after appropriate engineering evaluation and/or maintenance reinforcement is done.

1.4.4 The engineering evaluation should take into account the following factors:

- a) Proven track record of reliability and stability of operation of the equipment;
- b) Ground testing/inspection successfully performed;
- c) Quality of ground maintenance;
- d) Stable operational environment;
- e) Extension is consistent with equipment manufacturer recommendations;
- f) Verification of the proper functioning of executive monitoring shutdown capabilities.

1.4.5 UNMA shall conduct a safety risk assessment of the deviation in addition to the engineering evaluation. Possible mitigations may include:

- a) Reinforcing ground testing and maintenance;
- b) Additional monitoring;
- c) Review of the engineering evaluation and safety assessment on a regular basis;
- d) Define procedure to deal with the return to standard validity periods, taking into account potential inspection backlog;
- e) Implementation of a record for tracking the use of the alleviation instrument.

1.4.6 Subject to the conditions above being met, an extension of the period for checks, maintenance and calibration beyond those normally permitted by the Authority’s prescriptive provisions may be granted under controlled and monitored conditions.

1.4.7 The measures above shall be applicable from 1st March 2020 to 31st October 2020 unless otherwise communicated

by the Authority

1.5 GENERAL RETURN-TO-WORK CONSIDERATIONS

Transitioning back to work, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic requires careful consideration by the UNMA in order to maintain the health and well-being of staff. Take note that the Uganda government requirements imposed across the country shall supersede the considerations here.

1.5.1 Continue to prioritize social/physical distancing between staff and visitors in the workplace wherever practicable:

including rethinking and potentially repositioning the layout of offices, meeting rooms, desks, seating and other office furniture. Ensure staff and visitors have easy access to personal protective equipment that may be required (face masks, hand sanitizer, etc.). Walkways and other thoroughfares within and between work and non-work areas may require visible demarcations (sign posts, roped or taped boundaries, etc.) to reduce physical interaction, prevent the build-up of crowds or queues, etc. Staff and visitors may be required to be screened for COVID-19 prior to entry into the workplace.

1.5.2 Monitor who is where and how they move around the workplace:

UNMA should ensure that as staff and visitors access the workplace, it is important to know who is in the building, which areas they have accessed and when, so that in the event that a staff member or visitor is discovered to be infected with the disease it is possible to know who the infected person may have come into contact with previously.

1.5.3 Phase (or stagger) the re-introduction of staff to the workplace:

UNMA should ensure re-introducing staff incrementally to the workplace rather than requiring all staff to return simultaneously. Consider identifying and prioritizing essential staff with no underlying health conditions for a return to work first. As they return to workplace, evaluate the experience and the lessons learned (good and bad) that can be utilized to ensure that the workplace is a safe environment for staff and others who may return at a later date

1.5.4 Consider setting-up a room (or rooms) where staff can self-isolate if they exhibit symptoms of the disease within the workplace:

UNMA should ensure that staff members speak with their line manager/supervisor before considering a return to work. UNMA may decide that a staff member that is unwell or displaying symptoms should stay at home and they should quarantine/self-isolate at home for a period of time. Staying away from work may also apply where a staff member feels uncomfortable or unsafe to return to work.

1.5.5 Evaluate and communicate progress on a continuing basis:

UNMA should ensure that as staff and visitors return to the workplace, it is essential that the mitigation measures implemented are continually reviewed to assess their effectiveness. Where gaps or other deficiencies are identified, these should be accorded a high priority and expeditiously addressed.

1.6 RELEVANT RESOURCES

The following resources are relevant to the sustained provision of aeronautical meteorological services to support air navigation:

- a) Quality management system;
- b) Risk management;
- c) Business continuity.

1.6.1 Quality management system:

The implementation of a properly organized quality management system (QMS) is a foundational component of meteorological service for international air navigation, and a mandatory requirement within The Uganda Civil Aviation regulatory framework.

1.6.2 Risk Management:

As part of QMS implementation, UNMA should be able to demonstrate that they have identified, considered and taken appropriate action to mitigate any risks and capitalized on any opportunities that may affect service delivery. The approach to risk must be proportionate to the consequences, should the risk be realized.

1.6.3 Business continuity:

UNMA should implement ‘business continuity management’ (BCM) that will ensure advanced planning and preparation in order to maintain service delivery during an interruption to normal operations and to quickly resume service delivery after an interruption to normal operations has occurred. UNMA should ensure that their business continuity management is closely associated or intertwined with quality management and risk management referenced above.

1.7 *SURVEILLANCE OF METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES*

1.7.1 In order to minimize the person-to-person contact in line with social distancing requirements during the period of COVID-19 pandemic, the Authority shall not conduct physical inspections and audits on meteorological services.

1.7.2 The following options shall be considered in conducting surveillance:

- a) Conducting desktop inspections;
- b) Using UNMA’s Quality Management System structures to conduct inspections/audits on behalf of the Regulator, using oversight surveillance checklists.

1.8 *FEEDBACK AND REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE*

1.8.1 UNMA should ensure that at all times feedback is sent to Uganda Civil Aviation Authority on the specific challenges encountered and the mitigations measures implemented during this period of scaled down operations due to government restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.8.2 Feedback or requests for assistance can be submitted, in writing to the Director Safety, Security and Economic Regulation at Uganda Civil Aviation Authority, Head Office; P.O. Box 5536 Kampala-Uganda, Email; dat@caa.co.ug.

By direction of:

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