

MEDIA STATEMENT

15 December 2011

CAA has begun investigating the cause of the Zwartkops aircraft accident

In a statement released earlier today, the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) confirmed that it has begun the process of investigating the cause of a light aircraft accident that occurred on Wednesday, 14 December 2011 at around 18:30 near Zwartkops Raceway in Pretoria. Available information at this stage suggests that a pilot and a passenger took off from the Zwartkops Air Force Base for a low-level flight and were destined to return and land at Zwartkop Air Force Base later on the day.

According to eyewitnesses, it would seem that the pilot was attempting to execute a forced emergency landing on the R55 road. Unfortunately, the road was busy at the time and as a result the aircraft hit the roof of a vehicle that was travelling towards Laudium. Upon impact, the Fisher Super Koala homebuilt aircraft was destroyed and both pilots were fatally injured. The driver and passengers who were travelling in the vehicle were unharmed, but were taken to hospital for observation.

"We extend our sincere condolences to the friends and families of the deceased," said Zakhele Thwala, the acting Director of Civil Aviation.

"On receiving the notice, we dispatched our investigators to start the process of collating data that would help in determining the actual cause of the accident. In line with worldwide standards as set by the international Civil Aviation Organisation, our investigators will attempt to produce a final report within 12 months. If they are unable to produce the final report during the specified period, they will release a preliminary report on the progress made," explained Mr. Thwala.

According to Thwala, 104 aircraft accidents have been reported this year, compared to 147 last year and 126 in 2009. In terms of fatalities, there were 30 in 2009, 24 in 2010 and 38 this year. "Even though the number of accidents reported is thus far lower than in recent years, we are concerned with the gradual increase of the number of fatalities as a result of these accidents. We therefore urge members of the flying community to exercise caution, follow applicable procedures and make the right decisions. We can never over-emphasise the fact that one fatality is one too many," said Mr. Thwala.

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About the SACAA:

The South African Civil Aviation Authority ("SACAA") is a juristic body established in terms of the Civil Aviation Act, 2009 (Act No. 13 of 2009) ("the Act"). SACAA is governed and controlled by the Civil Aviation Authority Board ("the Board"). In terms of mandate, the SACAA is tasked with promoting and maintaining a safe, secure and sustainable civil aviation environment, by regulating and overseeing the functioning and development of the industry in an efficient, cost-effective, and customer-friendly manner according to international standards.

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