This document is a translation of the original assessment in Swedish by SHK of the response to the recommendation. In case of discrepancies between this translation and the Swedish original text, the Swedish text shall prevail in the interpretation of the assessment.

EASA
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Assessment of European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) response to safety recommendations

Background

On September 9, 2020, the final report RL 2020:08 was published concerning an accident in Storsandskär, Umeå, Västerbottens County, on July 14, 2019, related to parachute operations. All onboard were fatally injured (one pilot and eight parachutists).

In the report, two safety recommendations were submitted to EASA (RL 2020:08 R1 and R2).

EASA was recommended to:

- Consider introducing a formal training programme for pilots in parachute operations (R1).
- Review the approval procedures of mass and balance documentation when certifying aircraft approved for parachute operations (R2).

On July 7, 2020, EASA submitted a response to both recommendations.

The response that refers to safety recommendation R1 is designated as an "intermediate response". In the response, EASA outlines the organization's view on the need for formal training for pilots conducting flights within parachute operations. The response states that EASA did not consider such training to be an appropriate measure as such operations are within the normal flight envelope for an aircraft. Furthermore, it appears that EASA assessed that the introduction of such training would not support the principle of proportionality for the general aviation community and thus not be compatible with the work that the organization carries out in relation to general aviation where regulatory simplification is an important part.

The response states that the case as far as R1 is concerned has the status "Open" within EASA.

The response relating to safety recommendation R2 is designated as a "final response". The response states that EASA has carried out the requested review and that the conclusion of the review was that the mass and balance documentation acceptance criteria currently in place are sufficiently safe and robust and do not need to be changed.

The response states that the case as far as R2 is concerned has the status "Closed - Partial agreement" within EASA.

On July 8, 2021, another accident occurred in connection with parachute operations. In the accident, which occurred in Örebro, all on board were fatally injured (one pilot and eight parachutists). SHK also investigated this accident.

In December 2022, a meeting was held between SHK and EASA in Cologne due to the two accidents. During the meeting, the safety recommendations submitted to EASA after the accident in Umeå were discussed. Furthermore, possible additional safety recommendations to EASA was discussed due to the accident in Örebro.

SHK's final report regarding the accident in Örebro was published on January 30, 2023. In the final report (SHK 2023:03) two safety recommendations were submitted to EASA, one of which consisted in recommending that EASA consider introducing a formal training leading to a rating for pilots within parachute operations where the rating is maintained through refresher training (SHK 2023:03 R1).

On April 27, 2023, EASA submitted a response to the recommendation. In the response, which is designated as an "intermediate response", EASA describes the work that is performed within the organization due to the recommendation. EASA has essentially stated the following in its response.

EASA has performed a Safety Issue Assessment (SIA) related to the parachute operations. It concludes that the safety risk needs to be mitigated. Therefore, a Best Intervention Strategy (BIS) of parachute operations process has been initiated. The BIS process will develop further on proposed SIA actions. This process may result in risk mitigation actions related to the rulemaking, safety promotion or any other suitable means. EASA also intends to launch a campaign in 2023 that will highlight the most common causes of accidents in skydiving operations. The campaign aims to spread knowledge and experience about operational procedures that contribute to mitigate high risks.

The response states that the case within EASA has the status "open".

SHK's assessment

Statistics from EASA show that flying in parachute operations is associated with high risks and several fatal accidents have occurred in recent years. SHK therefore has a very positive view of the focus that safety issues linked to flight in parachute operations are now receiving within EASA. SHK also welcomes the measures that are now being taken.

It is not possible to fully determine whether and, if so, how the specific recommendations that SHK has submitted towards EASA regarding the issue of a formal training for pilots who is conducting flights within parachute operations will be accommodated based on the information that EASA has provided thus far, partially during the meeting in Cologne and partly in response to the recommendation regarding the accident in Örebro. It is therefore too early to make a final assessment of safety recommendation R1. SHK will follow the ongoing work within EASA and look forward to receive information about the continued process within EASA regarding safety recommendation R1.

Regarding safety recommendation R2, EASA has described the measures carried out and SHK makes the assessment that the safety recommendation is satisfactory (Closed - adequate response).

Best regards,

Jenny Ferm
Chair Accident Investigations