



**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
TECHNICAL CENTRE, OPPOSITE SAFDARJUNG AIRPORT, NEW DELHI**

General Safety Circular 01 of 2025

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**SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE SPECIAL AUDIT TO ASSESS AVIATION
ECOSYSTEM AND STRENGTHEN AVIATION SAFETY
ARCHITECTURE**

1. Introduction

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is committed to fostering a world-class aviation ecosystem in India that is safe, efficient, and sustainable. To achieve this, a new framework for Comprehensive Special Audits is being launched. These audits will provide a holistic evaluation of the aviation sector, meticulously examining safety, operational efficiency, and regulatory compliance.

By adopting a risk-based and integrated approach, these audits will proactively identify systemic vulnerabilities, enhance resilience, and ensure strict adherence to International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) and India's National Aviation objectives. This initiative underscores the DGCA's unwavering commitment to continuously strengthening of safety architecture through collaborative engagement with all stakeholders.

This robust audit framework is fully aligned with global best practices, including ICAO Annex 19, the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP), the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP), and the ICAO Asia Pacific Regional Aviation Safety Plan (AP-RASP), as well as India's National Aviation Safety Plan (NASP). The DGCA will further enhance this commitment through active bilateral and multilateral cooperation and participation in regional safety programs, thereby solidifying India's reputation for aviation safety and facilitating the mutual recognition of audit outcomes.

2. Regulatory Provisions

This circular is issued under the authority of the Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024, the Aircraft Rules, 1937, and Civil Aviation Requirements (CARs) issued by the DGCA. It also aligns with India's obligations under the Chicago Convention and ICAO SARPs. These legal instruments establish a robust framework for a structured audit process, ensuring accountability, transparency, and adherence to global safety standards while addressing the unique dynamics of India's aviation ecosystem.

3. Purpose and Objectives

Traditionally, regulatory and safety oversight functions within Indian aviation have been conducted in silos, with different directorates performing inspections and audits specific to their respective domains. These activities include planned/unplanned surveillance inspections, random spot checks and ramp inspections, which primarily assess compliance and safety within individual aviation segments.

In a significant paradigm shift, the Comprehensive Special Audit is designed to transcend existing siloed assessments by evaluating the aviation ecosystem holistically. This special audit will focus on examining the Safety Management Systems (SMS), operational practices, and regulatory adherence across all aviation domains. The goal is to generate a 360-degree evaluation of the aviation ecosystem, reflecting both its strengths and areas needing improvement. These special audits will be over and above the Regulatory Audits carried out as per the Annual Surveillance Program.

4. Scope and Applicability

The Special Audit applies to all primary aviation entities, including scheduled, non-scheduled, and private air operators, Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) organizations, Approved Training Organizations (ATOs), Flying Training Organizations (FTOs), Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP), Aerodrome Operators, and Ground Handling Agencies (GHAs). Additionally, it encompasses supporting elements such as technology providers, emergency response systems, supply chain networks, and regulatory coordination bodies. This broad scope ensures a holistic evaluation of the interconnected components that define the aviation ecosystem.

5. Special Audit Framework and Assessment Dimensions

The audit framework adopts a multi-dimensional assessment model to evaluate the aviation ecosystem comprehensively. The Safety Architecture dimension examines SMS effectiveness, positive safety culture implementation, and risk management processes, ensuring robust hazard identification and safety performance monitoring. The Operational Excellence dimension assesses flight and ground operations, crew resource management, and business continuity planning to optimize efficiency and service quality. Regulatory Compliance verifies adherence to regulatory provisions, including documentation and licensing validity etc.

6. Special Audit Team Composition

Special Audits will be conducted by multidisciplinary teams led by a senior DGCA official (DDG/Director) as the Lead Auditor, supported by specialists from Flight Standards, Air Safety, Airworthiness, Airspace & Air Navigation Services, Licensing, and Aerodrome Standards directorates. JDG will lead the audit teams for surprise inspections or special audits as and when directed by the Director General. Whenever necessary, external experts from industry may be included to provide specialized insights. This diverse team composition ensures a comprehensive evaluation that leverages both regulatory expertise and industry-specific knowledge, fostering credible and actionable findings.

7. Special Audit Methodology and Techniques

The audit process employs a combination of techniques, including document and record reviews to verify compliance, on-site inspections of facilities and equipment, structured interviews with management and operational staff, simulation and training record checks, and safety data trend analysis. These methods enable a thorough assessment of operational practices, safety culture, and

systemic resilience. Audits may be tailored to the entity's size, complexity, and risk profile, ensuring efficiency and relevance in the evaluation process.

8. Special Audit Triggers and Scheduling

Special Audits may be initiated based on mandatory triggers, such as critical safety events (e.g., Serious Incidents or Accidents), persistent regulatory non-compliance, safety audit findings, operational disruptions or ICAO audit findings. Proactive scheduling includes annual ecosystem assessments, thematic audits targeting specific risks, and post-implementation reviews following major regulatory or technological changes. Entities will receive 14 working days' notice for routine audits, 3 working days for targeted follow-ups, or immediate deployment for critical safety concerns, ensuring timely and responsive oversight.

9. Special Audit Execution Process

The audit process is divided into three phases. The Pre-Audit Phase (5-7 days) involves intelligence gathering, stakeholder consultation, risk profiling, and audit plan development. The On-Site Audit Phase (3-5 days) includes an opening meeting to clarify objectives, followed by document reviews, inspections, interviews, process observations, and daily debriefs to discuss preliminary findings. The Post-Audit Phase (10-15 days) encompasses finding validation, risk assessment, final report preparation, and publication. This structured process ensures transparency and stakeholder engagement throughout.

10. Findings Classification and Resolution

Special Audit findings will be categorized as Immediate Corrective Action (Level 1) safety risks requiring 7-day resolution, Short-Term Corrective Action (Level 2) significant concerns with 30-day resolution, Long-Term Corrective Action process improvements with 90-day resolution, or Observations (positive practices for adoption) in accordance with the manual of Regulatory Audit of DGCA. Findings from the ramp inspection will be classified in accordance with the guidance provided in ICAO Doc-8335 (Manual of Procedures for Operations Inspection, Certification and Continued Surveillance) / DGCA Ramp Inspection Manual.

11. Corrective Action and Monitoring

Audited entities must submit a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) i.r.o. Major and Minor findings within 15 days of receiving the final report, detailing root cause analysis, remedial actions, preventive measures, implementation timelines, and success metrics. DGCA will monitor CAP implementation through progress reviews and verification audits, ensuring effective resolution of findings. Best practices will be shared across the industry, and exemplary efforts will be recognized to encourage a culture of continuous improvement.

12. Confidentiality

The Special Audit upholds a confidential approach, aligned with ICAO Annex 19 principles, to foster open reporting and positive safety culture. Safety information, commercial data, and personal details will be protected. Sharing of safety related information will be or to be published in the denotified form.

13. Enforcement and Compliance

Non-compliance with audit findings or failure to implement CAPs may result in progressive

enforcement actions, including advisory guidance, formal warnings, operational restrictions, financial penalty, suspension, or revocation of licenses, as per the Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024, the Aircraft Rules, 1937, relevant CARs, and Enforcement Policy & Procedures Manual. Enforcement decisions will consider public safety, compliance history, and entity cooperation, ensuring fairness and proportionality/natural justice.

14. Appeals

The audit process is grounded in the regulatory framework, ensuring due process, fair hearings/natural justice and evidence-based findings. Entities may appeal against audit findings through a structured mechanism and within established timelines as per applicable regulations and timeline prescribed therein.

15. Continuous Improvement and Program Evaluation


The special audit findings will be reviewed annually along with stakeholder surveys, international benchmarking to refine methodologies and adopt advanced tools. Technology required to be adopted for continuity and integration, such as data analytics will enhance efficiency, and training to be reviewed continuously to ensure staff expertise.

16. Conclusion

This circular establishes a forward-looking framework for Comprehensive Special Audits, reinforcing India's commitment to a world-class aviation ecosystem. By addressing safety, efficiency, and sustainability through a collaborative, data-driven approach, DGCA aims to set a global benchmark for aviation safety oversight. All stakeholders are expected to cooperate fully, embracing opportunities for improvement to ensure a resilient and thriving aviation sector.

17. Effective Date and Review

This circular is effective immediately upon publication and will be reviewed annually to maintain relevance.



(Faiz Ahmed Kidwai)

Director General of Civil Aviation