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Bird Strike Risk Management – A UK CAA Perspective

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Mandatory bird strike reporting was introduced in the UK in January 2004, resulting in a 60% increase in reporting. Although reporting is mandated for aircrew only, currently the CAA has no procedure for ensuring compliance. Approximately 2,000 bird strikes are reported annually to the UK CAA (a 3 fold increase since 1990), of which approximately 1,400 are considered 'confirmed' strikes. Serious strike events, i.e. those causing damage or having an effect on flight, account for 55-60 occurrences per annum; this number has not increased in line with the increase in traffic levels, 2000-2007. The CAA, working with aviation stakeholders, published a set of bird strike definitions. We believe the segregation of confirmed with unconfirmed strikes to be beneficial to the CAA in conducting its regulatory oversight of aerodromes, and also of benefit to those responsible for aerodrome risk assessment initiatives. The bird strike database provides a foundation for an aerodrome's bird strike risk management as part of the operator's safety management culture and its safety management system (SMS). The basis of all bird strike risk management policy is in the planning and the effective use of human resources. Procedures and diligence which reflect the principles of good safety management that an aerodrome operator is required to apply to other aspects of aircraft operations within its responsibility, equally apply to bird strike management. The training and competence of those employed in bird control is a key component, (and an area in which the UK is currently reviewing to establish a best-practice foundation for training programmes). The UK may lead on this issue, as the European Aviation Safety Agency looks to take over aerodrome certification policy from 2013. As custodian of all UK bird strike data, the UK CAA does not routinely release data to third parties (i.e. general public). The CAA stance on the release of bird strike information is currently being tested due to a Freedom of Information request. We believe this case sets a potentially problematic precedent.