

Canadian safety chiefs query airline checks

JIM BAGNALL/OTTAWA

CANADA'S Transportation Safety Board has criticised Transport Canada for failing to ensure that safety deficiencies it had uncovered during routine airline audits were actually fixed.

In a report to transport minister Doug Young, the Board notes that it has investigated 19 aircraft accidents since 1984, mostly involving small regional carriers, in which the quality of auditing or follow-up inspections was an issue.

The report notes that Transport Canada auditors gave Air Manitoba a clean bill of health in June 1993. In January 1994, two months after the crash of an Air Manitoba Hawker Siddeley 748, auditors discovered "maintenance shortcomings" serious enough to result in suspension of the airline's operating certificate.

The Safety Board questions

how two audits so close together could produce such completely different results.

In another case, involving the fatal crash of a Central Mountain Air Douglas DC-3C, the Board discovered that the carrier had regularly been exceeding weight limits for years. Transport Canada auditors failed to notice that the cargo pallets were 2.2m further aft than shown on a sample calculation sheet provided by the company.

Because of these and other examples, the Board is recommending that the transport minister order more in-depth audits immediately an airline shows a higher risk profile.

The Board also recommends that Transport Canada develop ways of systematically ensuring that airlines correct safety violations uncovered by audits — and impose penalties where carriers prove reluctant to do so. □



Four Dornier 328s will be operated by Lone Star among the Texas cacti

Dornier 328s to Star in Texas

TEXAS-BASED regional carrier Lone Star Airlines has ordered four Dornier 328s and taken options on a further four of the 30-seat high-speed turboprops.

The first aircraft will enter service in January, replacing 19-seat Fairchild Metros used on routes from Dallas/Forth Worth to Chihuahua and cities in Mexico.

The announcement follows the just-confirmed sale of 20 328s, with 20 on option, to USAir

Express carrier Jetstream International, the first of which will enter service in February. Lone Star is Daimler Benz Aerospace (formerly DASA) subsidiary Dornier's third US regional-airline customer for the 328. Nine aircraft have been delivered so far to Horizon Air.

Daimler Benz says that it has 76 firm orders and 75 options for the 328 from 17 customers, including three US corporate operators. □

Boeing starts work on UPS freight 767

BOEING WAS DUE to begin building the first 767 freighter on 6 January at its Everett assembly site, with work scheduled to start on the front spar of the wing. The cargo floor will also be "loaded" on to production jigs one week later.

The aircraft will be the first of 60 on order and option for United Parcel Service (UPS) and will be rolled out on 5 May, with certification expected in early October.

The first five 767-300Fs will be delivered to UPS by the end of the year. Two freighters a month will be dovetailed into the production of airliner versions, although "...we could go to three", if needed, says 767 freighter programme manager John Quinlivan.

To make sure that production of the new freighter does not interrupt the smooth flow of passenger types, tooling people, planners and engineers will be on site during assembly to check on the work.

"They will quickly transfer infor-

mation to people who don't have to guess at what was on the designer's mind a year before," says Quinlivan. Apart from giving the specialists good experience before moving on to other projects, Quinlivan says that the scheme will make assembly "goof-proof".

Approximately 91% of the design has now been "released" to production. "It's crunch time, we've got to finish the engineering, but we've already started seeing parts coming together," Quinlivan adds.

Major fuselage assemblies built in Japan by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Kawasaki Heavy Industries will be delivered in January and early February. Final reviews of the first nose section (section 41) were expected to have been completed at Wichita, Kansas, by the end of December. The final body join of the major sub-assemblies is scheduled to take place around 12 April.

Flight tests will focus on "envi-

ronmental conditions", says 767 freighter chief engineer, David Anderson. "The single most important areas will be in smoke detection, the smoke seal between the cargo compartment and the cockpit and the balance of the air-conditioning system."

Planning is also well in hand for the general-market freighter version, 13% of which has been released to production.

That model differs from the UPS aircraft in having a powered cargo-handling system, a more sophisticated galley and the ability to carry perishable cargo. The first of two general freighters for Asiana Airlines will be delivered in June 1996, with the second following in June 1998.

Boeing predicts that a market exists for more than 600 767 freighters as Boeing 707 and McDonnell Douglas DC-8 replacements. The aircraft will be able to carry 54t over 6,000km (3,270nm) or 45.5t over 7,850km. □

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ THAI A330

The first Airbus A330-300 powered by twin Pratt & Whitney PW4168 turbofan engines entered service with Thai Airways International on 19 December.

■ MYANMAR DELIVERY

Myanmar Airways International has taken delivery of a second Boeing 737-400 leased from Malaysia Airlines. The airline plans to use the aircraft to launch a service between Rangoon and Dhaka in Bangladesh and add more flights to Singapore and Bangkok.

■ MAS CONVERSION

Malaysia Airlines (MAS) plans to bolster cargo capacity by converting two Boeing 747-200 passenger aircraft into freighters. The carrier expects a fivefold increase in cargo growth up to 1999.