

# CAA confirms indefinite suspension of Comair's air operator certificate

Following the 24-hour precautionary suspension of Comair's Air Operator Certificate (AOC) privileges on Saturday, 12 March 2022, the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) confirms that the AOC is now indefinitely suspended pending the operator addressing all the findings as communicated by the regulator.



Bob Adams via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

The SACAA recognised the efforts of the operator to close the findings as speedily as possible and in this regard the operator started dispatching the evidence to the regulator from the evening of Saturday, 12 March.

The inspectorate team worked through the night to review the evidence received and at 6.30am on the morning of Sunday, 13 March 2022 the regulator accepted the corrective action and evidence submitted in respect of one Level 1 finding. This therefore means this finding is now closed. The review of the rest of the evidence of which the latest was received around 7.30am, will continue to be assessed and reviewed by the inspectorate this morning.

According to the Civil Aviation Regulations (CARs), the operator can appeal the decision of the suspension to the director in terms of Part 185.04.2.

## Operational investigation

The suspension follows the visit by the SACAA to the operator to investigate and determine the cause of a spate of occurrences affecting a concerning number of flights operated by Kulula.com and British Airways Comair. The SACAA sought to confirm Comair's compliance with applicable Civil Aviation Regulations (CARs). The inspection was also aimed at reviewing Comair's quality control management system (QC) and safety management systems (SMS) to establish compliance related to reporting, analysis and follow-up on occurrences, and corrective action plans to prevent recurrence.

This resulted in the regulator raising three level 1 findings, and one level 2 finding. In terms of the oversight philosophy of the regulator, a level 1 finding is an outcome which poses an immediate risk to safety and security, and it must be closed with immediate effect and a level 2 finding must be closed within seven days.

The SACAA says that it is fully committed to ensuring that the operator is back in the air and has dedicated a full team to assess and review the evidence as it gets submitted. The commitment to safety in this case supersedes any other need and this is to ensure that South Africa maintains its safety record of having zero fatal airline accidents in over thirty years on South African soil. The lives of our aviation personnel and the users of civil aviation services is paramount, and it is a responsibility the Regulator does not take lightly.

Commenting on the suspension, Comair CEO, Glenn Orsmond says: "This is a huge blow to our customers, employees and the flying public as it effectively takes 40% of the capacity out of the market. The implications for the aviation sector and the country are considerable should the suspension continue for any length of time."

He says the airline is continuing to engage the SACAA in a bid to get the suspension lifted but has been forced to cancel flights indefinitely as it cannot say when this may be.

"Our priority now is to assist passengers who have been stranded. We have chartered two aircraft to assist vulnerable passengers and those who most urgently need to travel."

Customers will be kept informed via SMS.

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