

AOPA, CAA to Forge New Era for General Aviation

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On Tuesday representatives of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association met with the recently appointed acting Director of Civil Aviation, Mr Zakhele Thwala.

The cordial meeting sought to foster greater cooperation between the Civil Aviation Authority and AOPA in order to both streamline the CAA and to develop general aviation in South Africa.

Mr Thwala frankly discussed the measures being taken at CAA to improve customer service, call response, transparency and consultation with the GA industry. Matters of major concern, such as the arbitrary application of regulations by inspectors and the difficulties experienced by many aircraft owners in obtaining their certificates of airworthiness are being addressed.



L-R: Chris Martinus (AOPA), Zakhele Thwala (Director Civil Aviation), Meent Borchers (AOPA), Phindile Gwebu (CAA), Koos Marais (AOPA chairman)

The quietly-spoken Director gave assurances that great efforts are being made at CAA to encourage and develop GA for the future. “After all, it would be very unwise for CAA to destroy the very industry that feeds us”, he said.

The Director has implemented many cost-cutting measures at CAA in order to turn around its ailing cash flow. Nonetheless, Mr Thwala apologetically proposed that CAA charges under part 187 of the Regulations need to be increased by 10 percent across the board and that passenger safety charges would have to be increased from R12 to R15. The fuel levy is to remain unchanged at 15c/litre.

AOPA will be studying these proposed increases and will revert to CAA in due course.

CAA is owed considerable amounts by government for continuing to investigate aviation accidents, notwithstanding that this function should be dealt with by the yet to be established Aviation Safety Investigation Board. A budget of R20-million has been requested from DoT to get the ASIB up and running, thus relieving CAA from this function.

There was considerable excitement about the IAOPA World Conference which is to be held in Stellenbosch Next year. Mr Thwala congratulated AOPA Chairman Dr Koos Marais for bringing this prestigious event to South African soil.

The Director proposed that AOPA meet with him on a regular basis in order to keep lines of communication open and to tackle more specific issues of concern to the industry.

“The meeting was frank, open and cordial” said AOPA's Koos Marais. “It was like a breath of fresh air compared with the difficulties we have had communicating with CAA in the past.”

Please view the official announcement of the World Assembly on

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QF5Q88vzf0>