



UNITED KINGDOM

AERONAUTICAL INFORMATION CIRCULAR

AIC 3/2002

(Pink 26)

10 January

Civil Aviation Authority

Aeronautical Information Service

Control Tower Building, London Heathrow Airport

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Editorial: 020-8745 3460 (NATS AIS)

Distribution: 01242-235151 (Documedia Ltd)

Content: 01293-573317 (Aircraft Certification Section)

Cancels AIC 36/1997(Pink 142)

QUICK DISCONNECT CONNECTORS FOR HEADSETS

1 Introduction

1.1 During the course of an accident an occupant was thrown clear of the aircraft but subsequently died from asphyxiation. The occupant was wearing a protective helmet which was fastened by its chin strap. On investigation it was clear that the failure of the headset lead plug to disconnect from the aircraft's fixed socket during the accident sequence, or of the assembly to break, had allowed part of the occupant's weight to be forcibly restrained by the helmet chin strap, by virtue of the tension in the headset lead. Ultimately the restraint effected by the chin strap caused the asphyxiation.

2 Recommendation

2.1 The Civil Aviation Authority strongly recommends that Commanders of Aircraft ensure that occupants who are wearing any form of hard or soft protective helmet incorporating a headset, which is retained by the use of a strap or other device, have the headset connected to an in-line connector that will automatically disconnect, if the lead is tensioned in any plane, or at any angle. The recommendation is equally applicable to any headset that employs a throat microphone. Ideally the connector(s) should be as close to the occupant's head as is practicable: a lead length of 150 to 300 mm from the headset to the connector(s) would be appropriate.

This Circular is issued for information guidance and necessary action.