

Deferral of Defects

If you're a certificated organisation recording and managing defects, make sure what you're doing complies with the rules, and your own exposition.

It's the responsibility of the pilot-in-command to record on the technical log any defect discovered during the preflight, flight or postflight (AC91-6.2 *Completion and use of Form CA006 – Technical Log*).

But it's the operator's responsibility to ensure the ongoing airworthiness of their aircraft.

Recording defects identified on the aircraft contributes to aviation safety, and is therefore a requirement of the rules.

The CAA's continuing airworthiness team, however, is seeing an increasing number of instances where operators are not recording, controlling, nor managing in-service defects in accordance with their expositions.

Those expositions must detail procedures surrounding the recording and deferral of defects, and who is authorised to carry them out. It's the operator's responsibility to ensure there's adequate training on those procedures and that written authorisation is provided to employees, where applicable.

An accurate and up-to-date tech log (or its approved equivalent) is the means by which a pilot decides to accept, or not accept, an aircraft for a given operation. This includes any limitations for any applied Minimum Equipment List (MEL) items.

Examples seen during audits of operators, however, include:

- » defects recorded and conveyed on a document other than a tech log or alternative approved document
- » multiple defects raised on the aircraft entering maintenance but not previously noted on the tech log

- » defects sighted on aircraft but not recorded in the tech log
- » defects recorded in the tech log with no further action or release-to-service recorded and subsequent flight carried out
- » defects recorded in the tech log and released to service quoting the minimum equipment level (rules 91.537, 91.509).

None of these instances complied with the operators' accepted procedures.

Operators under Part 119 must rectify any defect before an aircraft's next flight, or carry out the deferral of defects in accordance with their exposition, which includes the approved maintenance programme, a CAA-approved MEL, or acceptable data.

It's important that when a defect is deferred in accordance with the MEL, the pilot or engineer releasing the aircraft to service under Part 43 ensures the specific recording requirements are met.

The application of an MEL item and its subsequent impact on other systems needs to be carefully considered and understood, as limitations may affect aircraft operations.

A defect being covered by the MEL does not mean the aircraft can be further operated without an entry and appropriate release-to-service in the tech log.

The defect has to be assessed and documented as deferred in accordance with the MEL – including an expiry time for the deferral – repaired at the earliest opportunity before that expiry time, and a return-to-service carried out for the aircraft. ■

Rule 43.107 states that a placard must be placed "on each inoperative instrument and on or adjacent to the cockpit controls of each item of inoperative equipment, marking each item inoperative".

