PRELIMINARY SERIOUS INCIDENT REPORT

Accident and Incident Investigations Division

Serious Incident
- Preliminary Report -
AIID Ref No: CA18/3/2/1550

Figure 1: The file picture of the ZS-SZE aircraft. (Source: Planespotters.net)

Description:

On 11 May 2026, an Airbus A320 aircraft with registration ZS-SZE, operated as a scheduled passenger flight SA327, departed from O.R. Tambo International Aerodrome (FAOR) to Cape Town International Aerodrome (FACT) with six crew members and 137 passengers on-board.

Whilst at 6 000 feet (ft) above mean sea level (AMSL) and on approach for landing at FACT, the aircraft experienced severe turbulence and negative wind shear. An Alpha Floor mode activated (visual cue and aural alert) and the crew selected Flaps 1 to mitigate the stall. The aircraft also engaged alternate law because of a faulty Elevator Aileron Computer (ELAC) pitch, which was followed by the autopilot disengagement. The crew was unable to re-engage the autopilot. Thereafter, the aircraft experienced a positive wind shear, and it accelerated, triggering an overspeed warning. The crew retracted the slats to reduce speed, but the overspeed warning persisted. As a result, the crew flew the rest of the approach manually in alternate law, followed by direct law with the landing gears extended. The crew and the passengers were not injured after the aircraft landed on Runway 01 at FACT; the aircraft was also not damaged.

Occurrence Details

Reference Number	**:** CA18/3/2/1550
Occurrence Category	**:** Serious Incident (Category 1)
Type of Operation	**:** Commercial Air Transport (Part 121)
Name of Operator	**:** South African Airways
Aircraft Registration	**:** ZS-SZE
Aircraft Make and Model	**:** Airbus A320
Nationality	**:** South African
Place	**:** On approach to Cape Town International Aerodrome (FACT)
Date and Time	**:** 11 May 2026 at 1200Z
Injuries	**:** None
Damage	**:** None

Purpose of the Investigation

In terms of Regulation 12.03.1 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, this report was compiled in the interest of the promotion of aviation safety and the reduction of the risk of aviation accidents or incidents, and not to apportion blame or liability.

All times given in this report are Co-ordinated Universal Time (UTC) and will be denoted by (Z). South African Standard Time is UTC plus 2 hours.

Investigation Process

The Accident and Incident Investigations Division (AIID) was notified of the occurrence involving an Airbus A320 which occurred whilst the aircraft was on approach for landing at Cape Town International Aerodrome (FACT) on 11 May 2026 at 1200Z. The occurrence was classified as a serious incident according to the CAR 2011 Part 12 and the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) STD Annex 13 definitions.

The AIID has appointed an investigating team to conduct the investigation. The investigators were not dispatched to the serious incident site. Notification was sent to the State of Design and Manufacturer in accordance with the CAR 2011 Part 12 and the ICAO Annex 13 Chapter 4. The State has appointed an accredited representative and an expert. The AIID will lead the investigation and issue the final report of this serious incident in accordance with the CAR 2011 Part 12 and ICAO Annex 13.

The information contained in this preliminary report is derived from the information gathered during the on-going investigation into the occurrence. Later, an interim report or the final report may contain altered information in case new evidence is found during the on-going investigation that requires changes to the information depicted in this report.

The AIID reports are made available to the public at:
https://www.caa.co.za/industry-information/accidents-and-incidents/

Notes:

1. *Whenever the following words are mentioned in this report, they shall mean the following:*
   Serious Incident — this investigated serious incident
   Aircraft — the Airbus A320 involved in this serious incident
   Investigation — the investigation into the circumstances of this serious incident
   Pilots — the pilots involved in this serious incident
   Report — this serious incident report

2. *Photos and figures used in this report were taken from different sources and may have been adjusted from the original for the sole purpose of improving the clarity of the report. Modifications to images used in this report were limited to cropping, magnification, file compression, or enhancement of colour, brightness, contrast, or addition of text boxes, arrows, or lines.*

Disclaimer

Table of Contents

Abbreviation	Description
°	Degrees
°C	Degrees Celsius
AIID	Accident and Incident Investigations Division
AMSL	Above Mean Sea Level
AP	Autopilot
ATC	Air Traffic Control
A/THR	Auto Throttle
CAA	Civil Aviation Authority
CAR	Civil Aviation Regulations
C of A	Certificate of Airworthiness
C of R	Certificate of Registration
CRS	Certificate of Release to Service
CVR	Cockpit Voice Recorder
DFDR	Digital Flight Data Recorder
ELAC	Elevator Aileron Computer
FACT	Cape Town International Aerodrome
FAGG	George Aerodrome
FAOR	O.R. Tambo International Aerodrome
FD	Flight Director
FO	First Officer
ft	Feet (distance)
hPa	Hectopascal
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organisation
IFR	Instrument Flight Rules
ILS	Instrument Landing System
IMC	Instrument Meteorological Conditions
kt	Knots
m	Metres
METAR	Meteorological Aerodrome Report
MFD	Multi-Function Display
MTOW	Maximum Take-off Weight
nm	Nautical Miles
PFD	Primary Flight Display
PIC	Pilot-in-Command
QNH	Barometric Pressure Adjusted to Mean Sea Level
QRH	Quick Reference Handbook
SACAA	South African Civil Aviation Authority
SAWS	South African Weather Service
TOGA	Take-off/Go-Around
UTC	Co-ordinated Universal Time
VFR	Visual Flight Rules
VHF	Very High Frequency
Z	Zulu (Term for Universal Co-ordinated Time - Zero Hours Greenwich)

1. FACTUAL INFORMATION

1.1. History of Flight

1.1.1 On Monday, 11 May 2026, six crew members and 137 passengers on-board an Airbus A320 aircraft with registration ZS-SZE, operated as flight SA327, took off on a scheduled domestic flight from O.R. Tambo International Aerodrome (FAOR) to Cape Town International Aerodrome (FACT). The flight was conducted under instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) and under the provisions of Part 121 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, as amended.

1.1.2 The pilot-in-command (PIC) stated that whilst en route to FACT, the air traffic control (ATC) officer informed them that traffic was unable to land at George Aerodrome (FAGG) because of inclement weather conditions. The weather conditions also persisted in Cape Town. As a result, several aircraft approaching FACT had to divert to alternate aerodromes.

1.1.3 The ZS-SZE crew was instructed by the ATC officer to enter a holding pattern whilst at a cruise altitude of 36 000 feet (ft) near the Sierre Lime Victor (Sutherland VOR) beacon. Later, they were informed by ATC that traffic was now able to land at FACT. The crew then continued with the flight to FACT. The PIC handed control over to the first officer (FO) for a monitored approach. The cockpit crew instructed the cabin crew to secure the cabin before commencing descent to FACT in case they experience turbulence.

1.1.4 The ATC officer gave the crew a clearance to turn right base for Runway 01 and to maintain minimum clean speed because of the traffic ahead of them; the crew complied with all the ATC instructions. Shortly after, whilst at 6 000ft above mean sea level (AMSL), the aircraft briefly experienced severe turbulence of between 20 and 40 knots (kts) due to negative wind shear. The auto throttle (A/THR) automatically engaged Alpha Floor mode with visual cue and aural alert (Alpha Floor is an automated aircraft system response that activates maximum thrust when the system detects an imminent aerodynamic stall, intended to prevent loss of control), and the crew also selected Flaps 1 to mitigate a stall. Simultaneously, the aircraft engaged alternate law because of a faulty Elevator Aileron Computer (ELAC) pitch, which was followed by the autopilot (AP) disengagement. The crew was unable to re-engage autopilot thereafter.

1.1.5 Shortly after the negative wind shear, the aircraft experienced a positive wind shear and the aircraft accelerated; as a result, an overspeed warning activated. The crew retracted the slats, but the overspeed warning did not deactivate. The rest of the flight to FACT was manually flown in alternate law, and later, in direct law with the landing gears extended, until the aircraft landed at FACT.

1.1.6 The aircraft was not damaged during the serious incident. None of the occupants was injured.

Note: *The history of flight information is based on the crew statements received via the operator. The sequence of events of this serious incident still needs to be clearly established using the analysis of the digital flight data recorder (DFDR).*

1.2. Injuries to Persons

Injuries	Pilots	Crew	Pass.	Total On-board	Other
Fatal	-	-	-	-	-
Serious	-	-	-	-	-
Minor	-	-	-	-	-
None	2	4	137	143	-
Total	**2**	**4**	**137**	**143**	**-**

Note: Other means people on the ground.

1.3. Damage to Aircraft

1.3.1 None.

1.4. Other Damage

1.4.1 None.

1.5. Personnel Information

1.5.1 Pilot-in-command (PIC)

Nationality	South African	Gender	Male	Age	55
Licence Type	Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL)				
Licence Valid	Yes	Type Endorsed	Yes		
Ratings	Instrument				
Medical Expiry Date	31 August 2026 (Class 1)				
Restrictions	VNL – Valid only with correction for defective near vision				
Previous Incidents	None				

Note: Previous incidents refer to past serious incidents in which the pilot was involved if relevant to this serious incident.

Flying Experience:

Total Hours	21 217.0
Total Past 90 Days	176.4
Total on Type Past 90 Days	176.4
Total on Type	2 325.0

1.5.2 First Officer (FO)

Nationality	South African	Gender	Male	Age	31
Licence Type	Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL)				
Licence Valid	Yes	Type Endorsed	Yes		
Ratings	Instrument, Flight Instructor Grade II				
Medical Expiry Date	31 March 2027 (Class 1)				
Restrictions	None				
Previous Incidents	None				

Note: Previous incidents refer to past serious incidents in which the pilot was involved if relevant to this serious incident.

Flying Experience:

Total Hours	6 020.0
Total Past 90 Days	177.3
Total on Type Past 90 Days	177.3
Total on Type	566.0

1.6. Aircraft Information

1.6.1 Airbus A320 is a short-to-medium range single aisle airliner which has been in service since 1988. It is the first airliner with a fly-by-wire system, a side stick control and an Electronic Flight Instrument System cockpit. The A320 is 37.6 metres (123ft) long and can accommodate 140 to 186 passengers.

The subject aircraft was fitted with two International Aero Engines (IAE) V2500 Series turbofan engines.

Airframe:

Manufacturer/Model	Airbus Industrie / A320	
Serial Number	6147	
Year of Manufacture	2014	
Total Airframe Hours (at time of serious incident)	22 651.06	
Last Inspection (Hours & Date)	22 592.15	27 April 2026
Hours Since Last Maintenance Inspection	58.91	
Certificate of Release to Service (CRS)	27 April 2026	
C of A (Issue Date & Expiry Date)	26 October 2023	31 October 2026
C of R (Issue Date) (Present Owner)	11 September 2023	
Type of Fuel Used	Jet A1	
MTOW	77 000kg	

Operating Category	Standard Transport Category
Previous Incidents	None on record with AIID

Note: Previous incidents refer to past serious incidents in which the aircraft was involved if relevant to this serious incident.

Engine No. 1:

Manufacturer/Model	International Aero Engines V2527-A5
Serial Number	V17258
Hours Since New	35 457.20

Engine No. 2:

Manufacturer/Model	International Aero Engines V2527-A5
Serial Number	V17570
Hours Since New	25 044.10

1.7. Meteorological Information

1.7.1 The weather information below was obtained from the Meteorological Aerodrome Report (METAR) that was issued by the South African Weather Service (SAWS), recorded at FACT on 11 May 2026 at 1200Z. The SAWS report is appended to this preliminary report.

FACT 111200Z 31030G44KT 2000 RA BKN007 OVC020 17/16 Q1001 NOSIG=

Wind Direction	310°	Wind Speed	30kts gusting 44kts	Visibility	2 000m in rain
Temperature	17°C	Cloud Cover	Broken	Cloud Base	700 ft
Dew Point	16°C	QNH	1001 hPa		

1.8. Aids to Navigation

1.8.1 The aircraft was equipped with standard navigational equipment as approved by the Regulator (SACAA). There were no records indicating that the navigational equipment was unserviceable before the flight.

1.9. Communication

1.9.1 The aircraft was equipped with a standard communication system as approved by the Regulator. There were no recorded defects with the communication system before the flight.

1.9.2 Only the last 16 minutes of communication between the ATC and the crew were made available to the AIID investigators. At this stage of the flight, the aircraft had already descended from 36 000ft to 8 000ft. The Alpha Floor mode (with visual cue and aural alert) was encountered at approximately 6 000ft. The crew did not broadcast a distress call after the warning activated.

1.10. Aerodrome Information

Aerodrome Location	Cape Town International Aerodrome (FACT)
Aerodrome Status	Licensed
Aerodrome GPS coordinates	33°58'16.93" South 018°36'15.45" East
Aerodrome Elevation	151 feet
Runway Headings	01/19 16/34
Dimensions of Runways	3 201m x 61m 1 701m x 46m
Runway Used	01
Surface of Runway Used	Asphalt
Approach Facilities	Runway Lights PAPIs VOR/DME ILS LOC ILS GP RNAV (GNSS)
Radio Frequencies	ATIS - 127.00 MHz APN - 122.65 MHz SMC - 121.90 MHz TWR - 118.10 MHz

1.11. Flight Recorders

1.11.1 The aircraft was equipped with a digital flight data recorder (DFDR) and a cockpit voice recorder (CVR).

1.11.2 The CVR unit circuit breaker was not deactivated after landing at FACT, and thus, the data was overwritten. Therefore, the CVR data was not available to the investigating team to analyse.

1.11.3 The operator provided the investigating team with raw data from the DFDR.

1.12. Wreckage and Impact Information

1.12.1 Not applicable as there was no crash during the serious incident.

1.13. Medical and Pathological Information

1.13.1 Not applicable as there were no injuries or fatalities during the serious incident.

1.14. Fire

1.14.1 There was no pre- or post-impact fire.

1.15. Survival Aspects

1.15.1 None of the persons aboard the aircraft was injured.

1.16. Tests and Research

1.16.1 None.

1.17. Organisational and Management Information

1.17.1 The airline had a valid Class 1 Domestic Air Service Licence that was issued by the Air Service Licensing Council on 9 March 2026.

1.17.2 The airline was issued an Air Operating Certificate (AOC) by the Regulator under Part 121 of the CAR on 16 June 2025 with an expiry date of 31 July 2026.

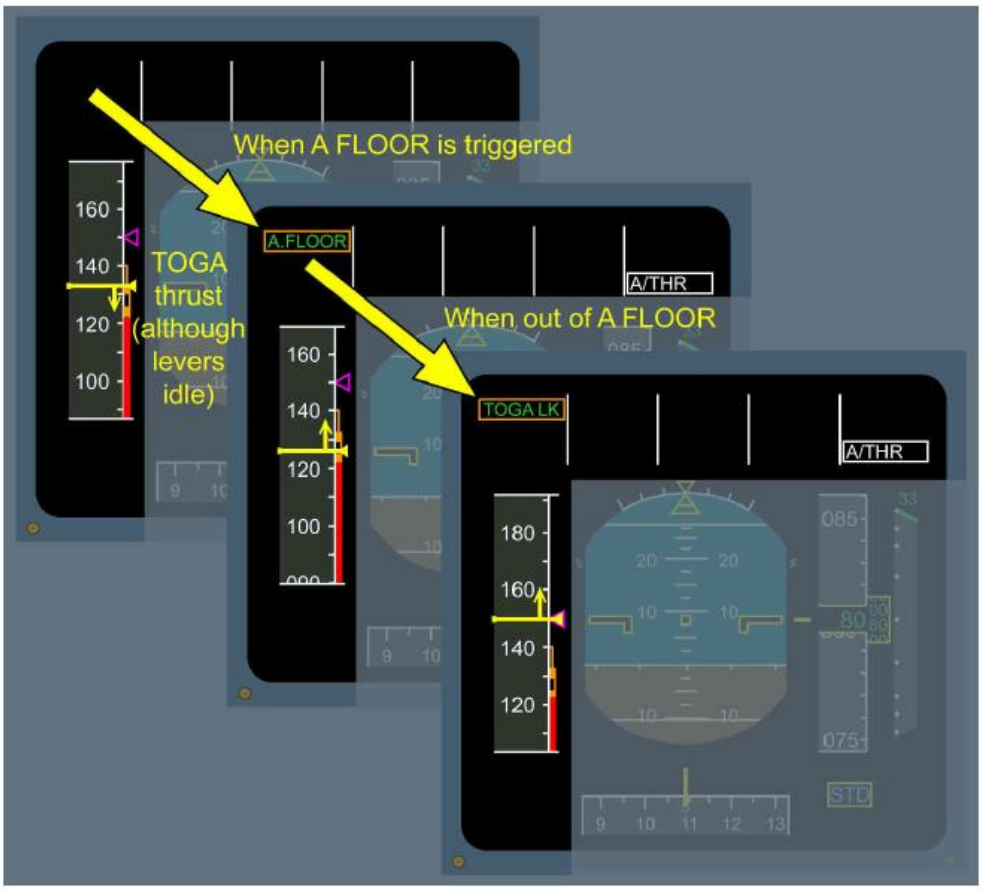
1.18. Additional Information

1.18.1 Alpha Floor (Source: Flight Crew Techniques Manual, Airbus A318/A319/A320/A321)

When the aircraft's angle-of-attack goes beyond the Alpha Floor threshold, this means that the aircraft has decelerated significantly (below Alpha Prot speed, which is the angle-of-attack protection speed): A/THR (Auto Throttle) activates automatically and orders Take-off/Go-Around (TOGA) thrust, regardless of the thrust lever position.

The example below illustrates:

- *The aircraft in descent with the thrust levers manually set to IDLE.*
- *The aircraft deceleration during manual flight with the Flight Director (FD) off, as indicated on the Flight Mode Annunciator FMA.*



When the speed decreases, so that the angle-of-attack reaches the Alpha Floor threshold, A/THR activates and orders TOGA thrust, even though the thrust levers are at idle. When the aircraft accelerates again, the angle-of-attack drops below the Alpha Floor threshold. TOGA thrust is maintained or locked. This enables the flight crew to reduce thrust, as necessary. TOGA locked (LK) appears on the FMA to indicate that TOGA thrust is locked. The desired thrust can only be recovered by setting A/THR to off, with the instinctive disconnect pushbutton. Alpha Floor is available when the flight controls are in Normal Law, from lift-off to 100ft Resolution Advisory (RA) at landing. It is inhibited in some cases of engine failure.

1.18.2 Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR)

Part 12.02.2 *(1) A PIC, a flight crew member, an operator or an owner, as the case may be, of an aircraft involved in an incident within the Republic, shall, as soon as possible but at least within 24 hours since the time of such incident, report such incident to—*

(a) the Executive responsible for Aircraft Accident and Incident investigation;

(b) an ATSU; or

(c) the nearest Police Station.

(2) A PIC, a flight crew member, an operator, or an owner, as the case may be, of an aircraft involved in an ATS incident within the Republic, shall, as soon as possible notify an ATSU of such ATS incident.

(3) An ATS personnel who witnesses an ATS incident, shall, as soon as possible, notify an ATSU of such ATS incident.

(4) An ATSU notified of an incident in terms of subregulations (1); (2); or (3) shall, immediately on receipt of the notification and as prescribed in Document SA-CATS 12, notify—

(a) the Executive responsible for aircraft accident and incident investigation; and

(b) an aerodrome manager, if such incident occurs on an aerodrome.

(5) A PIC, flight crew member, aircraft operator, or owner, as the case may be, of an aircraft involved in a serious incident within the Republic shall report such incident to the Executive responsible for Aircraft Accident and Incident investigation.

The serious incident occurred on Monday, 11 May 2026 at 1200Z; it was reported to the AIID on Tuesday, 19 May 2026, which is a contravention of the regulatory requirements, and which resulted in the loss of essential data.

1.19. Useful or Effective Investigation Techniques

1.19.1 None.

2. FINDINGS

2.1. General

From the available evidence, the following preliminary findings were made with respect to this serious incident. These shall not be read as apportioning blame or liability to any organisation or individual.

To serve the objective of this investigation, the following sections are included in the conclusions heading:

- **Findings —** are statements of all significant conditions, events or circumstances in this serious incident. The findings are significant steps in this serious incident sequence, but they are not always causal or indicate deficiencies.

2.2. Findings

Crew

2.2.1 The pilot-in-command (PIC) had an Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL) that was initially issued by the Regulator (SACAA) on 17 December 1996. The reissued PIC's licence had an expiry date of 31 March 2027. The PIC had flown a total of 21 217.0 hours of which 2 325.0 hours were on the aircraft type.

2.2.2 The PIC had a Class 1 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 22 August 2025 with an expiry date of 31 August 2026.

2.2.3 The first officer (FO) had an ATPL that was initially issued by the Regulator on 11 August 2016. The reissued FO's licence had an expiry date of 31 March 2027. The FO had flown a total of 6 020.0 hours of which 566.0 hours were on the aircraft type.

2.2.4 The FO had a Class 1 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 30 March 2026 with an expiry date of 31 March 2027.

2.2.5 The crew was aware of the inclement weather conditions in Cape Town as the air traffic control (ATC) officer had advised them whilst en route, as well as informed them that several aircraft could not land at George Aerodrome (FAGG), and thus, diverted to FACT.

2.2.6 The aircraft took off from FAOR at 0940Z and landed on Runway 01 at FACT at 1210Z with the flight time logged at 2 hours and 30 minutes.

Aircraft

2.2.7 The last maintenance inspection of the aircraft was conducted and certified on 27 April 2026 at 22 592.15 hours. The aircraft had accrued 58.91 hours since the last maintenance inspection.

2.2.8 The aircraft Certificate of Registration (C of R) was issued to the present owner on 11 September 2023.

2.2.9 The aircraft was initially issued a Certificate of Airworthiness (C of A) on 23 October 2023. The latest C of A had an expiry date of 31 October 2026.

2.2.10 The cockpit voice recorder (CVR) was not quarantined after the aircraft landed at FACT and the data was, therefore, not available to the investigators.

2.2.11 The digital flight data recorder (DFDR) raw data was made available to the investigation team. The data was shared with the Bureau of Enquiry and Analysis for Civil Aviation Safety (BEA) and Airbus. The data interpretation is being processed at the time of conclusion of this preliminary report.

Environment

2.2.12 The wind was blowing north-westerly and with rain condition during approach. The aircraft encountered strong crosswind conditions during approach whilst flying over mountainous terrain before landing on Runway 01 at FACT.

3. ON-GOING INVESTIGATION

3.1 The AIID investigation is on-going, and the investigators will investigate other aspects of this serious incident which may or may not have safety implications.

4. SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. General

The safety recommendations listed in this report are proposed according to paragraph 6.8 of Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation and are based on the conclusions listed in heading 3 of this report. The AIID expects that all safety issues identified by the investigation are addressed by the receiving States and organisations.

4.2. Safety Recommendations

4.2.1 None.

5. APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix A (Official weather report from the SAWS).

Appendix A

AIRCRAFT INCIDENT REPORT

South African Weather Service

1. Scope

The meteorological information provided in this report includes the following:

Observational weather data at/or in the vicinity of the paraglider accident/incident closer to the time of occurrence. These include but are not limited to:

Remote sensing data such as Satellite; RADAR imagery; etc.

Observational surface data in the form of METARs or SYNOPs - which contain weather elements such as:

- Dry-bulb and Dew-point temperatures;
- Wind speed and direction;
- Cloud cover;
- Visibility;
- Weather; and the
- QNH.

2. Purpose

To provide the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) with meteorological information required for their inquest into a paraglider accident/incident closest to the time of occurrence.

3. Background

SACAA requested a weather report for an inquest into an aviation incident that occurred at the Cape Town International Airport (FACT) in the Western Cape Province. The accident occurred at 12:00 Z on the 11 May 2026, at GPS coordinates 33°58´07´´ S 18°35´59´´E. The Airbus A320 experienced severe turbulence with a 20-40 knots (kts) negative windshear at 6000 feet (ft) above mean sea level (AMSL). The auto thrust went into ALPHA FLOOR and the crew selected Flaps1 to mitigate from the stall. At the same time the aircraft went into alternate law because of an elevator aileron computer ELAC) Pitch Fault and then the autopilot disengaged. The crew were unable to re-engage any of the AP's. After the negative windshear, the aircraft experienced a positive windshear and as the aircraft accelerated, the crew retracted the slats but still experienced an overspeed warning. The rest of the monitored approach was manually flown in alternate law, then direct law with landing gear extended until landing in FACT. The aircraft was not damaged, and none of the occupants was injured during the incident sequence. Instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) prevailed by day, and the flight was conducted under the provisions of Part 121 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) of 2011, as amended.

Figure 1: File photo of the aircraft. (Source: https://cdn.jetphotos.com/full/5/27299_1517150288.jpg)

4. Summary of observed, forecasted and warned for weather conditions closer to the estimated areas and time of the incident

Observational Data

Satellite Imagery

The MeteoSat Third Generation (MTG) Cloud Phase RBG satellite imagery was taken at 12:00 Z on 11 May 2025, which is when the incident has been reported to have occurred. A cold front system was moving past the area of incident resulting in a mixture of clouds around FACT (red location pin). The cloud phase RGB shows pinkish to yellowish clouds in FACT, which are indicative of thick water clouds with a mixture of small and large water droplets (Figure 2). Severe mountain waves can also be observed in the vicinity with corrugated patterns of the clouds.

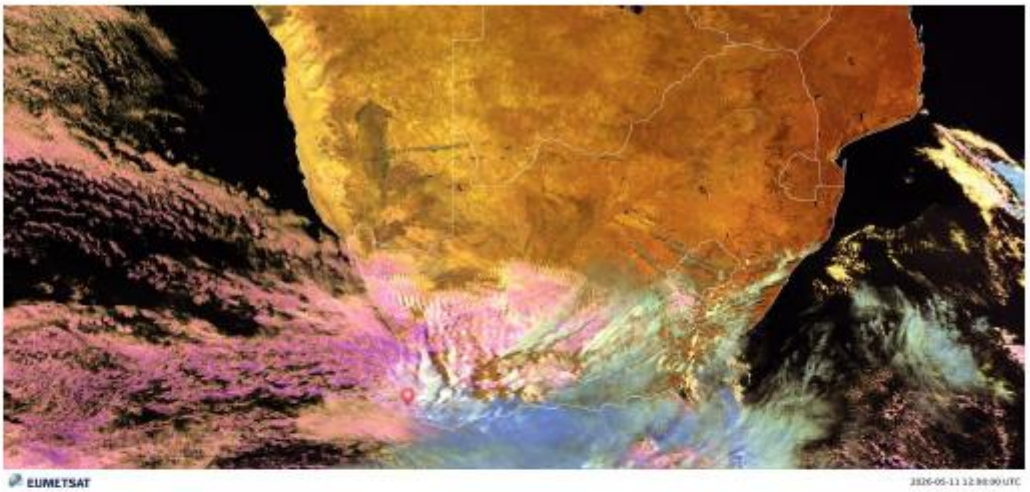


Figure 2: The MeteoSat Third Generation (MTG) Cloud Phase RBG satellite imagery was taken at 12:00 Z on 11 May 2026 (copyright Eumetsat).

METAR

The Cape Town international Airport (FACT) Meteorological Aerodrome Report (METAR) for the times near the time of the incident, let us focus on 12:00 Z:

Date: 2026-05-11 - **Time:** 11:30 (Packtime: 2026-05-11 11:24)

FACT 111130Z 32029G42KT 2000 RA BKN007 OVC020 17/16 Q1001 RERA NOSIG=

Date: 2026-05-11 - **Time:** 12:00 (Packtime: 2026-05-11 11:50)

FACT 111200Z 31030G44KT 2000 RA BKN007 OVC020 17/16 Q1001 NOSIG=

Date: 2026-05-11 - **Time:** 12:30 (Packtime: 2026-05-11 12:25)

FACT 111230Z 32027G42KT 2000 RA BKN007 OVC020 17/16 Q1001 NOSIG=

Figure 3: The Cape Town Internation Airport METAR at 11:30-12:30 Z on 11 May 2026.

Wind direction:	**310 °**
Wind speed:	**30 KT (15.43 m/s) gusting 44 kt (22.64 m/s)**
Visibility:	**2000 m in moderate rain.**
Clouds:	**Broken (BKN) cloud with base of 700 ft (213 meters) and Overcast (OVC) cloud with base of 2000 ft (610 meters)**
Weather:	**Moderate rain**
Current temperature:	**17 °C**
Dew-point temperature:	**16 °C**
Pressure reduced to mean sea level (QNH):	**1001 hPa**

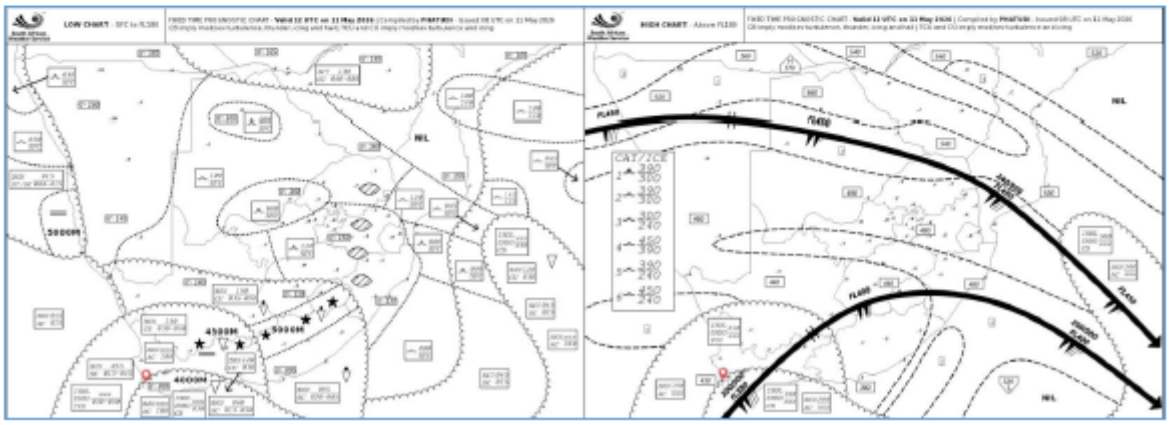
Trend: **No significant change is expected in the next 2 hours**

The Cape Town International Airport METAR (Figure 3) was indicating near-gale force north-westerly winds with 310 ° wind direction and wind speed of 30 knots gusting 44 knots as the front was passing. There were significant clouds reported which were broken at 700 ft and overcast at 2000 ft, coinciding well with the satellite image in Figure 2 where the area of incident is covered in cloud. Moderate rainfall is reported, reducing the visibility to 2000 m, also coinciding with the water clouds observed in the satellite imagery. The dew point depression indicated that the air was saturated, hence the reported rainfall. The pressure was low, at 1001 hPa, and there was no change in weather expected in the following 2 hours.

Forecasts

SIGWX CHARTS

The Significant Weather (SigWx) low-level and high-level charts below are valid for 12:00Z which was when the incident occurred (Figures 4). FACT is in an area where a mixture of significant clouds were expected at 12Z. Broken Stratocumulus clouds with bases as low as 1500-4500 ft were expected, together with broken Altocumulus (ACs) clouds with bases of 10 000ft and isolated embedded Towering Cumulus (TCUs) clouds as well as isolated embedded Cumulonimbus (CBs) clouds at 3000-5000 ft which inherently pose a hazard of moderate to severe turbulence and icing. Visibility was expected to reduce to 4000 m due to showers and rain while the freezing level was expected to be at 9500 ft.



Figures 4: The 12:00 Z low-level and high level SigWx charts for 11 May 2026.

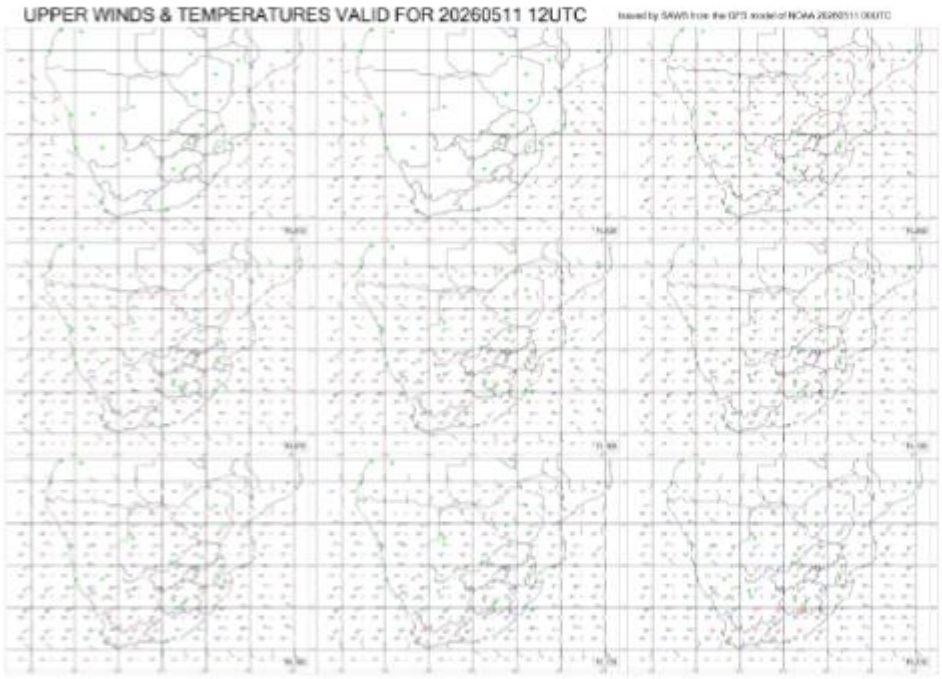


Figure 5: Upper winds and temperature forecasts valid till 12:00Z

Unfortunately there was no afternoon upper air ascent done on this day to verify the wind-flow above the surface.

The forecasted wind was 290 degrees at 05/10KT at 6000 feet based on the previous night Numerical Weather Products model run.

TERMINAL AERODROME FORECAST (TAF)

Date: 2026-05-11 - **Time:** 04:00 (Packtime: 2026-05-11 04:00)

FACT 110400Z 1106/1212 35023KT 9999 -RA FEW012 BKN035 TX18/1112Z TN11/1204Z TEMPO 1106/1110 4000 -RA PROB40 TEMPO 1106/1107 3000 RA BKN012 PROB40 TEMPO 1106/1113 34025G40KT PROB40 TEMPO 1200/1206 3000 RA BKN012=

Date: 2026-05-11 - **Time:** 10:00 (Packtime: 2026-05-11 10:01)

FACT 111000Z 1112/1218 33022KT 9999 -RA SCT007 BKN020 TX18/1212Z TN14/1205Z TEMPO 1112/1113 32025G35KT PROB40 TEMPO 1112/1116 32035G45KT TEMPO 1112/1118 4000 -RA BKN012 PROB40 TEMPO 1112/1114 2000 +RA BKN006 PROB40 TEMPO 1200/1210 3500 RA BKN012=

Figure 6: Cape Town International Airport (FACT) TAFs issued at 04:00 and 10:00 Z valid from 06 Z 11 May 2026 to 12 Z 12 May 2026 and 12 Z 11 May 2026 to 18 Z 12 May 2026, respectively.

The FACT TAFs valid from 06 Z 11 May 2026 to 12 Z 12 May 2026 and 12 Z 11 May 2026 to 18 Z 12 May 2026, respectively, indicate that at the time of the incident, strong north-westerly winds averaging at about 22 knots were expected with some light rain and broken clouds with bases between 2000-3500 ft. Winds were also expected to increase temporarily from 12Z to reach 25-35 knots and gusting at 35-45 knots while the rain reducing visibility to 4000 m with the cloud lowering to 1200 ft.

Warnings Issued

Following are Aerodrome Warnings issued for FACT near the time of the incident where near-gale force surface winds averaging at 29 knots, gusting 42 knots were observed, forecast and warned for. A crosswind component was also warned for during this period:

Date: 2026-05-11 - **Time:** 11:30 (Packtime: 2026-05-11 11:27)

FACT AD WRNG 7 VALID 111130/111330 SFC WIND 33029KT MAX 42KT OBS & FCST AT 1130Z=

Date: 2026-05-11 - **Time:** 11:30 (Packtime: 2026-05-11 11:32)

FACT AD WRNG 9 VALID 111130/111330 CROSSWIND COMPONENT: 22G32KT - SFC WIND 31029G52KT=

Figures 7: FACT Aerodrome Warnings valid for 11:30-13:30 Z on 11 May 2026.

Following are Windshear Warnings issued for FACT near the time of the incident where severe windshear was expected with surface conditions of 330° 29 knots and 1600 ft conditions being 340° 55kt:

Date: 2026-05-11 - **Time:** 11:30 (Packtime: 2026-05-11 11:27)

FACT WS WRNG 8 111130 VALID 111130/111330 SEV WS FCST SFC WIND: 33029KT 1600FT-WIND: 34055KT=

Figures 8: FACT Windshear Warnings valid for 11:30-13:30 Z on 11 May 2026.

Following are AIRMET and SIGMET Warnings issued for FACT near the time of the incident entailing moderate to severe warnings for turbulence at various levels, significantly low cloud, visibility reduction due to rainfall, and isolated embedded TCUs and CBs:

Figures 9: AIRMET and SIGMET Warnings issued for FACT on 11 May 2026.

Conclusion

The satellite imagery indicated that there were significant water clouds in the area of the incident, which coincides well with the weather conditions reported in the METAR. There were strong to near-gale force wind speeds that were recorded and reported for the FACT airport, gusting between 35-50 kt. The wind direction was predominantly north-westerly which is also a crosswind component direction for the airport. Because the system was intense with the pressure even lowering to 1001 hPa during the time of the incidents, many warnings were subsequently issued. Warnings ranged from the strong surface winds, crosswind component, windshear, turbulence at various levels, significantly low cloud, visibility reduction due to rainfall, to isolated embedded TCUs and CBs. The forecasts and warnings were in line with the observations of the significant weather conditions.