

For Immediate Release

10 September 2024

SACAA TAKES ACTION AGAINST MEDICAL DOCTOR ISSUING FRAUDULENT MEDICAL CERTIFICATES

Johannesburg. The South African Civil Aviation Authority is finalising an investigation into alleged improper and fraudulent conduct by Dr Nhlanhla Sishaba, a former senior Designated Aviation Medical Examiner (DAME). This follows a series of non-compliances and enforcement action taken by the Regulator.

Under the Civil Aviation Regulations (CARs), the Director of Civil Aviation may designate medical practitioners to conduct medical examinations on aviation personnel including pilots, air traffic controllers, cabin crew and flight engineers on her/his behalf, to ensure they meet the required standards for a valid license. The Director considers re-designation only to medical practitioners who have demonstrated satisfactory performance during previous designation periods.

Dr Sishaba's designation is under scrutiny due to ongoing investigations into alleged improper and fraudulent conduct. In 2023, an enforcement action resulted in a penalty being issued to Dr. Sishaba for non-compliance. Her designation as DAME expired on 31 March 2024 and has not been renewed pending the ongoing investigations into her conduct.

The SACAA online system flagged the fact that Dr Sishaba has continued to examine and issue medical certificates, in gross violation of civil aviation regulations. Under the regulations, all the certificates issued from 1 April 2024 are therefore invalid. All license holders who received medical certification from

Dr Sishaba from this date must present themselves for re-examination and certification to a current and valid DAME within the next 15 working days.

Further investigations identified the alleged use of non-medical and unauthorised personnel for conducting medical assessments and filing of fraudulent and incomplete medical reports in the SACAA medical system. The Civil Aviation Act mandates that aviation personnel undergo regular prescribed medical assessments to ensure their health status is compatible with their roles and licenses. The Director of Civil Aviation has notified known operators who used Dr Sishaba's services and has issued a General Notice to the aviation industry with further instructions.

"We view these allegations in a very serious light as they have a direct impact on the ability of aviation personnel to perform their duties in a safe manner as prescribed by the CARs. South Africa's aviation sector boasts an exemplary safety record, with no fatal accidents in the scheduled airline sector in nearly forty years. While our investigations are continuing, we cannot ignore these findings. Ensuring the safety of aviation services is our top priority, and we will pursue all available legal measures to resolve this issue swiftly." stated Poppy Khoza, Director of Civil Aviation.

License holders who are unsure of their status should contact the SACAA Aviation Medical Department immediately. Khoza thanked license holders and service providers who continue to participate in the investigation.

While this appears to be an isolated incident the SACAA warns that if any person designated with a responsibility to uphold safety, abuses that power, the Authority will not hesitate to act decisively against that individual.

DAMEs are required to submit completed medical assessments with supporting medical records to the SACAA online system for verification by SACAA's Medical Assessors. The SACAA's shift to an automated system has proven beneficial enabling the detection of such irregularities in real-time and without delay and improving data accuracy. To date the SACAA medical certification process is one

of the first business processes that was automated. In November 2022 the SACAA launched an eServices portal allowing aviation operators to renew and pay for their Air Operator Certificates and other approvals online. There is a possibility that the doctor may be using a manual back-up system to avoid detection. The SACAA has requested all SACAA related documents in Dr Sishaba's possession be immediately returned.

"We are pleased to see our investment in automation delivering results and encourage all operators to familiarize themselves with these services," concluded Khoza.

ENDS

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