

## **Airbus A320's descent below segment minimum safe altitude - ATSB Report**

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau has released the final investigation report into an Airbus A320's descent below segment minimum safe altitude during a non-precision instrument approach to Perth Airport. This was reported from Canberra on 16 January at 0035GMT

This serious incident occurred on 19 February 2016.

### **Report summary**

The aircraft was conducting a scheduled passenger service from Denpasar, Indonesia to Perth when the captain's flight management and guidance computer (FMGC1) failed. The flight crew elected to use the first officer's duplicate systems.

The flight crew were conducting an instrument landing system (ILS) approach at Perth Airport. They made a number of flight mode changes and autopilot selection – normal for an ILS approach with all aircraft operating systems available, but some of which relied on data from the failed FMGC1. As a result, the autothrust system commanded increased engine thrust and the crew, who had not expected this response, elected to conduct a go-around. An increased crosswind then prompted a change of runway.

During the approach to the new runway, the crew descended the aircraft earlier than normal, but believed that they were on the correct flight path profile. The crew became distracted trying to identify the location of the runway and were not effectively monitoring the aircraft's descent.

When the approach controller received a “below minimum safe altitude” warning for the aircraft, they alerted the crew to their low altitude and instructed them to conduct a go-around. The crew conducted another approach to the runway and landed safely.

**This serious incident highlights the extent to which unexpected events and distractions during the approach and landing can substantially increase what is often a high workload period. That workload increase is even more apparent when the aircraft systems are not operating normally, or the systems are operating in a way that is not fully understood by the crew.**

The ATSB urges pilots to ensure that they adhere to standard operating procedures, and that they should immediately initiate a go-around if the criteria for a safe continuation of the approach are not met.

The full title of the report is: *Descent below segment minimum safe altitude during a non-precision instrument approach involving Airbus A320, PK-AXY, 17 km WSW Perth Airport, Western Australia on 19 February 2016.*

A copy of the report is available on the ATSB's website here:

[https://www.atsb.gov.au/media/5773855/ao-2016-012\\_final.pdf](https://www.atsb.gov.au/media/5773855/ao-2016-012_final.pdf)

This report highlights the ongoing aviation safety issues of “too low on approach” and “inflight decision making”, which form part of the ATSB's SafetyWatch priorities. These are set out here:

<https://www.atsb.gov.au/safetywatch/>