

# Air Accidents Investigation Branch appointed as Space Accident Investigation Authority for the United Kingdom



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The Spaceflight Activities (Investigation of Spaceflight Accidents) Regulations 2021 set out that the AAIB, acting as the SAIA, now has the authority to conduct safety investigations when there are spaceflight accidents in or over the UK. Spaceflight launches from the UK are anticipated to commence in 2022.

As is the case with aviation, the AAIB will operate independently of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the UK Space Agency. The purpose of having an independent authority is to avoid any conflicts of interest or external influence in the conduct of an accident investigation. Like the aviation investigations conducted by the AAIB, spaceflight accident investigations will seek to improve spaceflight safety by promoting action to prevent recurrence. They will not apportion blame or liability.

Crispin Orr, Chief Inspector of Spaceflight Accidents: “This is a significant moment in the AAIB’s history. We are extremely proud that the Branch’s positive impact on aviation safety over many years has been recognised and we are being entrusted with this important new area of responsibility. Spaceflight activities launched from the UK offer great potential. We look forward to supporting the development of the industry by conducting independent investigation of spaceflight accidents, when required, to enhance safety. Our inspectors will conduct spaceflight investigations with the same rigour, expertise and professionalism that we are

renowned for in aviation.”

The Regulations set out the powers and duties of the AAIB, its designated inspectors and the investigator-in-charge. They stipulate what actions should be taken in the immediate aftermath of a spaceflight accident to preserve evidence and how any investigation will be carried out. The Regulations also include the duty to produce and publish a safety investigation report making recommendations where appropriate to enhance safety.

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