

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
on
Regulated Air Cargo Screening Facilities (RACSF)

General

Q1: What are the new requirements under the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) new policy direction?

A1: In September 2016, the ICAO announced its new policy direction that consignors not subject to approval by the authority for aviation security should be phased out by 30 June 2021. Consignors will either have to:-

- (i) be approved by the appropriate authority as a “validated” Known Consignor (KC); or
- (ii) be an “unknown consignor” with all their cargo subject to 100% security screening prior to being loaded on to a commercial aircraft.

Q2: How should Hong Kong respond to meet the security requirements under the ICAO's new policy direction?

A2: Hong Kong has an obligation to meet ICAO's security requirements. Under such requirements, consignors not subject to approval by the Civil Aviation Department shall become unknown consignors from 1 July 2021. Their air cargo shall be 100% screened prior to being loaded onboard aircraft. In anticipation of an upsurge in screening demand, the Government and the Airport Authority Hong Kong are planning to progressively build up cargo screening capacity in Hong Kong. A Regulated Air Cargo Screening Facilities (RACSF) scheme which enables and regulates air cargo screening at off-airport locations has been formulated. Interested entities can conduct air cargo security screening operations in their premises once such sites are accepted by the Civil Aviation Department (CAD) as RACSFs.

Besides, the Government has formulated a transitional arrangement for Regulated Agents (RAs) to progressively increase the required screening percentage of known cargo consigned by existing known / account consignors, which have not been validated by CAD, from 1% to 100% before the deadline imposed by ICAO (30 Jun 2021). Further details can be found in the following CAD website:

https://www.cad.gov.hk/english/icao2021_ta.html

Another way to meet ICAO's new policy direction is the validation of consignor as Known Consignor (KC). The KC Validation Scheme was developed in consultation with air cargo industry representative bodies. Consignors which produce / manufacture or assemble goods for transport as air cargo from secure facilities within Hong Kong can apply to the CAD for validation as a KC.

Q3: What are the major impacts to Hong Kong's present air cargo security regime under the ICAO's new policy direction?

A3: Under the ICAO's new policy, the existing known consignors recognized by their partnering Regulated Agents or aircraft operators will become unknown consignors unless they are validated and accepted by the CAD as known consignors. The cargo tendered by these unknown consignors shall be subject to 100% screening.

To help the air cargo industry to cope with the impacts, a scheme of RACSF has been introduced on top of the existing three major stakeholders in the air cargo security supply chain, namely known/account consignors, Regulated Agents and aircraft operators. The RACSF scheme enables and regulates air cargo screening facilities at off-airport locations. Besides, a transitional arrangement will be put in place for Regulated Agents to progressively increase the required screening percentage of known cargo consigned by existing known / account consignors, which have not been validated by CAD, from 1% to 100% before the deadline imposed by ICAO (30 Jun 2021). It should be reminded that, with effect from the commencement of Phase 1 of the transitional arrangement (i.e. from Jan 2020), RAs shall not recognize new account consignors by using Account Consignor Declaration of Compliance (ACDoC). Further details can be found in the following CAD websites:

https://www.cad.gov.hk/english/icao2021_reg.html

https://www.cad.gov.hk/english/icao2021_ta.html

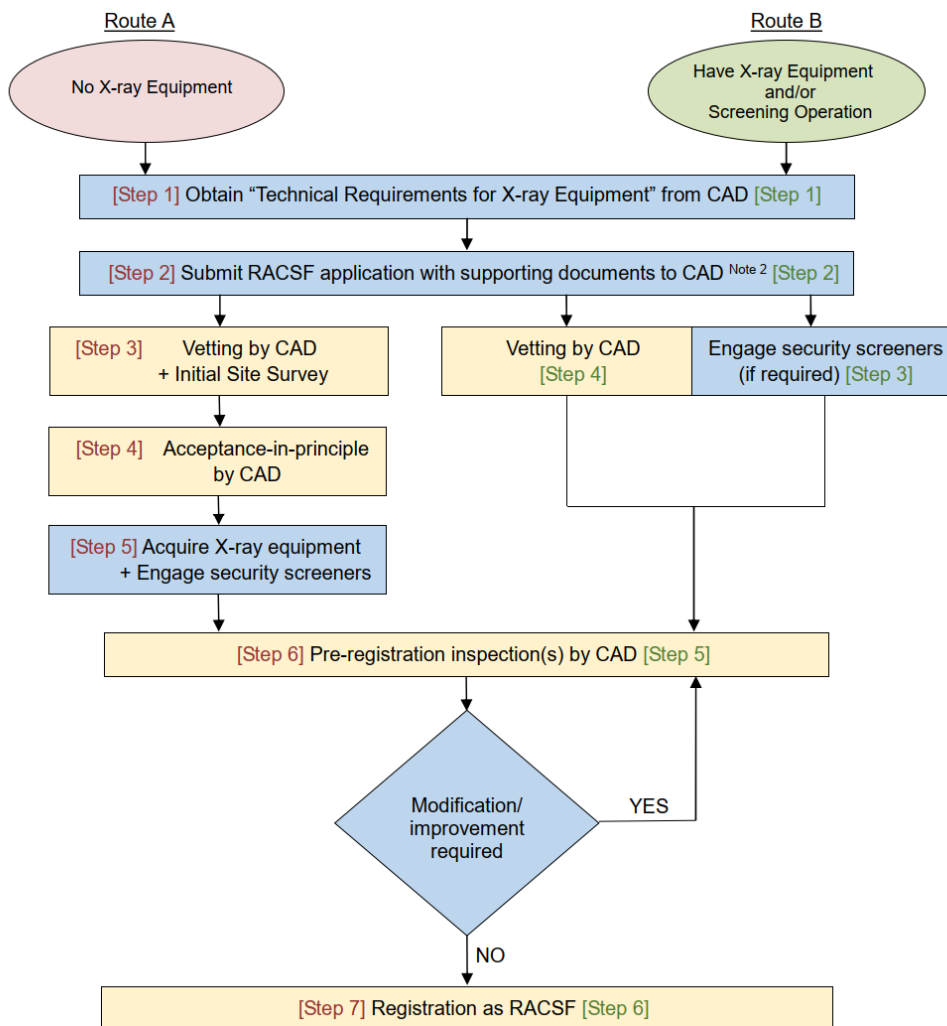
Application

Q4: Who are eligible to apply to become RACSF?

A4: Any entity (such as Regulated Agent, warehouse operator or any other entity) which intends to operate off-airport x-ray screening operations. It is not mandatory for Regulated Agent to become RACSF if the Regulated Agent does not operate off-airport x-ray screening operations.

Q5: What are the processes involved in the application for registration as RACSF?

A5: The two routes for application for registration as RACSF, (A) the applicants who have NOT acquired x-ray screening equipment, and (B) the applicants who have acquired x-ray screening equipment and/or are performing screening operations, are illustrated below.



For details, please refer to the RACSF Application Form.

Q6: How long does it take to process an application for registration as RACSF?

A6: There are two routes of application for registration as RACSF.

Route A: If the applicant has not acquired x-ray equipment, the applicant should reserve the time required for (i) acquiring and installation of x-ray equipment, (ii) engagement of security screeners, and (iii) at least 3 months for CAD's processing of its RACSF application before the intended date of operation of the RACSF.

Route B: If the applicant has acquired x-ray equipment, the applicant is advised to submit the application at least 3 months before the intended date of operation of the RACSF. The applicant should also reserve time for the engagement of security screeners.

The above is the normal processing time for an application. It may take a longer time if the applicant is required to submit further document proof for consideration by CAD (e.g. more detailed information about the proposed x-ray screening equipment), to improve its security measures and/or revise the RACSF Security Programme, or if there is a large number of RACSF applications submitted to CAD at the same time.

Q7: Will a RACSF application under Route A (i.e. x-ray equipment has not been acquired) be considered if the proposed warehouse facility is still in the planning stage and the site cannot be made available immediately for physical inspection by CAD?

A7: The RACSF applicant may still submit an RACSF application to CAD for consideration or initial acceptance in-principle. In this case, the applicant should (i) provide a written explanation to CAD detailing the reasons why the subject site is not available at the moment; and (ii) as far as practicable, generally outline the tentative security measures and arrangements for the application. The final acceptance of RACSF will be subject to (i) the provision of all the required documents; and (ii) the results of the pre-registration inspection(s) to ensure that all appropriate security measures and arrangements are in place.

Q8: What is the validity period of RACSF?

A8: There is no expiry date on RACSF registration as long as the RACSF operator is able to continuously comply with the relevant requirements. RACSF is subject to CAD's monitoring of the compliance with the RACSF Security Programme, Handling Procedures for RACSF, notices and any other directions given from time to time by CAD. Non-compliance may result in suspension or de-registration of the RACSF status.

Q9: Are applicants required to specify the model of x-ray equipment to be installed even for applications under Route A? What other information regarding the equipment shall be included?

A9: Applicants under Route A should specify the model of the x-ray equipment to be installed at the RACSF. Applicants should also provide the following information regarding the equipment when submitting the application for initial assessment:

(i) technical specifications;

(ii) documents demonstrating that the equipment is certified by other authorities, e.g.

- US Transportation Security Administration (TSA)
- European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC)
- UK Department for Transport (DfT)

(iii) Any other information that may be useful for the assessment, e.g. list of airports/facilities (in Hong Kong and other places) that the subject x-ray equipment are currently in use.

Screening

Q10: Can RACSF company staff members become certified screeners through certification by a Certification Body (CB)?

A10: Having been trained and certified by a Certification Body (CB), company staff members of RACSF operator may serve as certified screeners to conduct cargo screening in the RACSF.

Q11: What criteria should security screeners meet to perform screening duties in RACSF?

A11: The security screeners shall fulfill the selection criteria in respect of medical fitness and academic qualifications. Besides, security screeners, whether or not employed by RACSF or from a screening service contractor, shall be trained and certified by a Certification Body (CB) before they are allowed to perform the screening duties of air cargo in RACSF; and attend refresher training conducted by a CB and be recertified by such CB once every 12 months. For details please refer to Part II Sections 9.2 and 9.3 of the RACSF application form.

Q12: What are the requirements on the daily duty time limit for x-ray screeners?

A12: According to the Hong Kong Aviation Security Programme (HKASP), which is built upon the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) requirements and guidelines, a person engaged in aviation security work which involves screening of cargo shall be restricted to working (as a screener) for not exceeding a total of 8 hours a day (excluding meal breaks) unless for emergency or under exceptional circumstances. Planned or regular shift patterns would not be considered as “under the emergency or exceptional circumstances”. Screeners shall have adequate rest between continuous screening duties/shifts and they shall not take up other work duties which may impair their security screening work performance which requires a high degree of mental concentration.

Q13: In the event that a screener has worked beyond the daily duty time limit under the emergency or exceptional circumstances, what should an RACSF do?

A13: According to the HKASP, a report detailing the reasons for extending the screener working hours beyond the duty time limit should be submitted for CAD's review. Planned or regular shift patterns for extending the working hours beyond the duty time limit would not be counted as “under the emergency or exceptional circumstances” and accepted.

Q14: What should the work interval and rest period, and other related considerations for x-ray screener be?

A14: According to ICAO guidance applicable to x-ray equipment screeners, the optimal work interval for screeners is 25 minutes and the screeners should not interpret x-ray images continuously for periods exceeding 45 minutes. Rest periods of at least 15 minutes should be interspersed with work periods in which the screener is continuously engaged in interpreting x-ray imagery. The relating factors to be considered may include (i) time of day and shift such as shift starting at early morning or overnight shift, (ii) level of cumulative sleep loss, (iii) effect of previous work shifts, (iv) type of task to be performed, and (v) workload.

Q15: What screening methodologies shall be adopted by RACSF in screening of air cargo?

A15: X-ray screening is the primary screening method. The screening of air cargo at RACSFs shall be conducted by the screeners certified for performing cargo screening. If the cargo cannot be cleared through in the primary x-ray screening (e.g. due to presence of high-density items or identification of possible threat items), the cargo shall be searched by hand or physical check at piece level. In general, RACSFs who adopt hand search as the primary screening method would not be accepted by CAD.

Q16: How to screen oversize/odd cargo (e.g. aircraft engine) which cannot pass through x-ray screening machine tunnel?

A16: According to HKASP, cargo can be (i) screened by x-ray, or (ii) searched by hand or physical check at piece level. If the above two security controls cannot be applied, other means of security control could be considered for acceptance by Aviation Security Authority. For application of security control to oversize/odd-size cargo, the use of explosive trace detection (ETD) supplemented by a visual check would generally be considered to be acceptable in principle. ETD Screeners shall be certified and perform screening duties in accordance with Certification Body's certification plan.

Q17: What are the shipping documents required to be made available for x-ray screening?

A17: It is stipulated in the HKASP that, where x-ray screening of the consignment takes place, the screeners should have access to the details of what the consignment contains, in order that this can be verified against the x-ray image. Though there is no specific requirement on the type of shipping documents to be made available during screening, a documentary means to enable the screeners to know what the consignment contains should be available. The above requirements are imposed on aircraft operators/RAs and will also be applicable to RACSFs.

Q18: What are the requirements on the keeping of screening records under the RACSF regime?

A18: RACSF operator shall maintain a log of all security screening conducted. The security screening log can be kept in electronic format or in hardcopies. RACSF operator shall also issue a receipt as proof of security screening and indicate on the receipt that the cargo have been "security checked" with the company name of the RACSF operator, the company chop and the RACSF code as assigned by CAD. RACSF operator who is also a RA may not need to issue receipts to itself after conducting self-screening of air cargo, if the RACSF operator has already maintained security screening log. Records of screening shall be kept for a minimum period for 3 months for inspection by CAD.

The RACSF shall maintain the x-ray images / recordings of screened cargoes (by using the images capturing / recording function of the x-ray screening equipment) for at least 31 days after screening is conducted. Further details can be found in the RACSF Application Form and the Handling Procedures for Regulated Air Cargo Screening Facilities (RACSF).

Q19: How should the air cargo screened at RACSF be protected and checked to ensure its security integrity?

A19: The aircraft operators/regulated agents shall check the cargo consignments accepted from RACSF operators to ensure no sign of unlawful interference and protect the cargo consignments under their custody all along until loading onto departure aircraft.

RACSF operators shall maintain a log of all security screening conducted in electronic format or in hardcopies, and issue a receipt as proof that cargo has been x-ray screened at RACSF. The security screening log and the copies of security screening receipts issued shall be kept for inspection by CAD. The existing security status code "SPX" will still be used for the cargo screened at the RACSF, which can be transported on board all aircraft, be it passenger aircraft or all-cargo aircraft.

Q20: What are required to be indicated on the RACSF's receipt after its conduct of cargo screening?

A20: In addition to the basic information such as MAWB/HAWB number, gross weight, number of pieces, date and time of screening, RACSF shall indicate on the receipt that (i) the cargo have been "security checked", (ii) the company name with the company chop, and (iii) the RACSF code as assigned by CAD. The screening receipt is unique to individual RACSF.

Q21: How should we distinguish between screened and unknown cargo for cargo acceptance by CTO under RACSF regime?

A21: Similar to the Regulated Agent Regime (RAR), segregation of screened cargo from unknown cargo can be achieved by (i) specially assigning separate storage areas for screened cargo (i.e. "SPX" cargo), and/or (ii) labelling the screened cargo, depending on the operational considerations of individual RACSF operator. In the subsequent cargo acceptance at CTOs, documentation (shipping document) check for the security status of the cargo consignment received from RA with cargo appearance shall be conducted. Further details can be found in RACSF SP and Handling Procedures for RACSF downloadable at CAD website.

https://www.cad.gov.hk/english/icao2021_form.html

Q22: If cargo has been already security screened at RACSF and securely transported to Cargo Terminal Operator (CTO), does the cargo needs to be screened again at CTOs?

A22: As far as Hong Kong's aviation security requirement is concerned, if cargo is security screened at the RACSF and then protected all along the transportation from RACSF to CTOs, the cargo needs not be screened again at the CTOs. However, the RACSF applicant shall take note of any more stringent security requirements imposed by foreign civil aviation authorities.

Q23: What are the items required to be detected through the conduct of air cargo screening?

A23: Security screening under the RACSF regime aims to detect explosives and incendiary devices in air cargo consignment but aircraft operators may initiate other screening at CTOs for other purposes such as safety detection of dangerous goods. On top of meeting the RACSF's security requirements, aircraft operators may opt for additional check on air cargo consignments based on aircraft operators' own safety considerations.

Q24: Is it feasible to use computed tomography (CT) technology to screen air cargo?

A24: The Government recognizes the benefits of new screening technology and is open to consider any feasible options including but not limited to the use of CT. On the other hand, the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) in conjunction with the CTOs is also looking for feasible technological solutions such as canine screening.

Q25: Can CT technology be applied in palletized or containerized form (such as in Q6 and Q7 contours)?

A25: A definite conclusion has not been reached by aviation security experts as to whether the CT technology is acceptable for aviation security screening of air cargo in full ULD up to Q6 and Q7 contours.

Q26: Where can I find a list of the screening equipment makes and models acceptable to CAD?

A26: There are various makes and models of screening equipment which can achieve the detection requirements. For the makes and models of the screening equipment that can be accepted for use under the Hong Kong Aviation Security Programme (HKASP) to conduct security screening, the RACSF applicant shall submit the details of screening equipment to CAD for assessment.

For the detailed requirements and the list of x-ray screening equipment which were accepted in-principle by CAD, please refer to the following CAD website:

https://www.cad.gov.hk/english/icao2021_xray.html

Q27: What licences for the screening equipment should RACSF applicants obtain from the Radiation Board of Hong Kong (RB), and how much time does it take to obtain the licences?

A27: RACSF applicants are required to submit applications for relevant licence(s) under the Radiation Ordinance (Cap 303) to and obtain approval on their applications from Radiation Board of Hong Kong (RB) for each X-ray screening equipment before CAD's Pre-registration Inspection.

In general, RACSF applicants are required to apply for the 2 RB licences below for each equipment:

- (i) Licence for Possession of an Irradiating Apparatus in Non-functional State, also known as "P1" licence (to be applied before the delivery of the equipment to the RACSF site); and
- (ii) Licence for Possession of an Irradiating Apparatus in Functional State, also known as "P2" licence (to be applied before the operation of the equipment at the RACSF site).

As advised by RB,

- (i) it usually takes 3 weeks to process the "P1" licence. Applications can be submitted to RB as early as 3 months before delivery of the screening equipment at the RACSF site.
- (ii) the processing time for "P2" licence is approximately 8 weeks. Applications can be submitted to RB after obtaining the "P1" licences and upon knowing the delivery date of the screening equipment.

In view of the processing time by RB, RACSF applicants are thus recommended to liaise closely with the equipment supplier regarding the delivery schedule and apply for the RB licences early. The Pre-registration Inspection by CAD can be conducted only after the above two licences have been obtained from RB.

For more information on the application for RB licences, please contact RB Licensing Office through the following means:-

- Website at <https://www.rbhk.org.hk/eng/index.html>;
- Enquiry telephone number at (852) 3620 3754; or
- E-mail at enquiry@erls.gov.hk

Note: The ones who intend to possess and use the X-ray screening equipment should apply for the RB licences. As such, if the screening equipment at the RACSF is possessed and used by a screening service contractor for conducting the cargo screening, the contractor instead of the RACSF operator should apply for the RB licences.

Q28: What is the minimum number of screeners needed for each RACSF?

A28: There is no requirement on the minimum number of screeners in each RACSF, be them its own employees or the employees of a screening service provider, as long as they have been trained and certified by a Certification Body (CB) acceptable to CAD and will perform screening duties in accordance with the CB's Certification Plan.

Transportation

Q29: After screening at RACSF, how should air cargo be secured during transportation from RACSF to CTOs in the HKIA?

A29: For the details of the transportation security, the list of methodologies of secure transportation that are accepted in principle, and the assessment process on new methodologies proposed, please refer to the following CAD website:

https://www.cad.gov.hk/english/icao2021_ts.html

Q30: Can secure transportation of screened cargo from RACSF to CTO be performed by RA?

A30: After the conduct of cargo screening at the RACSF, the RACSF operator may either (i) apply security protection and deliver the screened cargo to a CTO at airport; or (ii) pass back the custody of the screened cargo to RA for security protection and delivery to a CTO at airport. The choice between the options (i) and (ii) above is a business arrangement to be agreed between the RACSF operator and the RA involved. Further details are provided in the Handling Procedures for RACSF downloadable at:

<https://www.cad.gov.hk/english/icao2021.html>

Q31: If a RA / a RACSF delivers screened cargo to the CTOs in a truck, how should the truck be sealed for secure transportation?

A31: The cargo lots, instead of the truck itself, can be separately sealed, wrapped or locked. When a cargo lot is unloaded at a CTO, that particular lot shall be checked to ensure no sign of unlawful interference.

Warehouse

Q32: What is the minimum premise area required for processing cargo in RACSF?

A32: Premises, such as warehouse, for processing and storage of consignments of air cargo shall be secured and access controlled to prevent and detect unauthorized access such that introduction of explosives and incendiary devices into air cargo consignment can be prevented. The size of cargo processing area is not a factor to be considered for RACSF application as long as the above principle can be complied with.

Q33: Can a RACSF serve more than one customer cargo agent?

A33: An RACSF can receive cargo from more than one customer cargo agent and perform screening of the cargo received. After security screening, the RACSF shall ensure that the required warehouse operations (such as segregation of screened cargo from unknown cargo) and cargo documentation (such as screening log and receipt) will be in place.

Q34: Can a RACSF accept cargo consignment from non-RA or unknown consignor?

A34: An RACSF shall only receive cargo from RAs for security screening. An RACSF shall not directly receive cargo from non-RAs or unknown consignors for security screening, unless the RACSF itself is a RA and is eligible to annotate the security status (SPX) of the screened cargoes and its RA code on the shipping documents before tendering the cargo to CTOs / airlines.

Training

Q35: Where can we find the training institutes for RACSF training?

A35: An RACSF shall have at least the two Nominated Persons who have successfully completed an RACSF Security Training Programme run by training institutes acceptable to CAD. A list of the training institutes and their contact details can be found at CAD website.

https://www.cad.gov.hk/english/icao2021_training.html

Interested parties can contact the organizers direct for enrolment.

Q36: Do the staff members of RA who have attended and completed an RAR training programme acceptable to Civil Aviation Department still need to attend another training programme to meet the training requirements of RACSF?

A36: Each RACSF should have at least two Nominated Persons who have successfully completed the RACSF training programmes at the training institutes acceptable to CAD. RAR training cannot be considered equivalent to RACSF training.

Transitional Arrangements

Q37: How should RAs select cargo for screening to meet the screening percentage requirement applicable to different phases of the transitional arrangements?

A37: The existing QCP under the Regulated Agent Regime (RAR) requires RAs to select and conduct x-ray screening of cargo on “random” basis. There is no change to this selection principle which will also be applicable during the period of transitional arrangements under the RACSF regime.

Q38: Will Regulated Agent Regime (RAR) still exist in Phase 4 of the transitional arrangements when air cargo is 100% screened?

A38: One of the major roles of the Regulated Agents registered under the RAR is to protect the screened known cargo against unlawful interference during cargo processing, storage and transportation. These roles will still be necessary during and after the transitional arrangements.

Q39: Can the cargo screened at RACSF be counted for QCP purpose?

A39: Cargo screened at RACSF and those screened at CTOs can both be counted for QCP purpose.

Q40: What is the retention period for screening records to meet the benchmark screening percentage of the transitional arrangement?

A40: CAD is reviewing the retention period of documents for RAs during the transitional arrangement periods and beyond June 2021, and will make announcement in due course. Generally speaking, if an entity is both an RA and an RACSF and in the case that the document retention period of a particular one, the longer period of the two shall prevail.

Others

Q41: What is the major difference between Regulated Agent (RA) and Regulated Air Cargo Screening Facility (RACSF)?

A41: In comparison, the role of RA is generally about the freight forwarding operations and the handling of related air cargo shipping documentations while the role of RACSF is mainly on the security screening operations. There are in fact similarities between the role of RA and that of RACSF. There will be no restriction for RA to be RACSF. RA can also apply/register as an RACSF.

Q42: What is the liability of RACSF?

A42: In terms of the responsibilities under the aviation security regulatory requirements, namely the Hong Kong Aviation Security Programme (HKASP) drawn up under Chapter 494 of the Hong Kong law, the principals are responsible for the implementation of the relevant aviation security measures and procedures. On top of RA and aircraft operators, RACSF operator and Certification Body (CB) will also be included as the principals in the HKASP and both RACSF and CB should be liable for their roles and responsibilities as defined in the HKASP.

The contractual or other relationship between the principals and the agents / the third parties who are performing security operations on behalf of the principals is a matter for the companies concerned. Screeners, regardless of which companies they are employed, are certified by CB responsible for screener training and certification and perform screening on behalf of RACSF. As to the liabilities regarding other laws such as those related to civil claims, CAD may not be in a position to comment. Various businesses may buy insurance as necessary for the purpose of commercial risk management.

Q43: Is a register of RACSF regularly updated and published for industry's reference?

A43: Similar to the practices adopted in RAR, a register of valid RACSF is regularly updated and published by CAD in the following website for industry's reference.

https://www.cad.gov.hk/english/icao2021_regracsf.html

Q44: Does RACSF meet the aviation security requirements of foreign civil aviation authorities (e.g. US TSA)?

A44: The framework of RACSF in Hong Kong is formulated based on the ICAO's standards and guidance. More stringent security requirements above ICAO's standards could be imposed by foreign civil aviation authorities in accordance with foreign states' own situations.