

Making a Ramp Check painless (with checklist)

Declan Selleck
24 June, 2024



The **EU Ramp Inspection Program (RIP)** is still alive and kicking – or the **EU SAFA Programme**, as it used to be called.

The RIP is not exclusive to Europe. Your aircraft can be inspected under the program in 49 different countries around the world, including Canada, Morocco, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates.

Here are the key points:

- Even though it's now called the EU Ramp Inspection Program, ramp inspections for third country operators are still referred to as "SAFA ramp checks". Yeah, it's confusing.
- Ramp checks are possible in every country in the world – but follow a more regulated and common structure in SAFA countries – totalling 49 – see the map and list below.
- There is a **standard checklist** that is used by Inspectors in all SAFA countries, which you should be familiar with – see further down.
- Three categories of findings have been defined. A "**Category 1**" finding is called a minor finding; "**Category 2**" is a significant finding and "**Category 3**" a major finding. The terms "minor", "significant" and "major" relate to the level of influence on safety.
- If there is a "**corrective actions before flight authorised**" finding – then the inspector is concerned and a repair must be made before the aircraft is released to fly.



Unless your aircraft looks like this, you have little to worry about.

Here's how a ramp check normally goes down:

- The flight selected will either be your last of 6 legs for the day, or after a gruelling 12 hour jetlag-inducer, or at 3am when you were thinking about a quick nap during the turnaround. This much is guaranteed.
- As you pull on to the stand, **you will notice more yellow vests than normal hanging around.**
- Two of these will be your friendly ramp inspection team (to be fair, they almost always are)
- A short time later, those yellow vests will be in the cockpit, and the first request will be for a look at your license, medical, aircraft documents (like Insurance, Airworthiness), and flight paperwork. Make sure you've done your fuel checks and there are a few marks on the flight plan.
- If you get a good cop, bad cop scenario, one will disappear down the back (this will be the nice guy) and check the cabin, while the first will stay and ask you tough questions about the TCAS system.
- Some time later, you'll get a list of findings. The average check is probably about 30 minutes.
- You can be guaranteed they will always have at least one finding - which will probably be obscure.
- Sign off the checklist, and you're on your way.

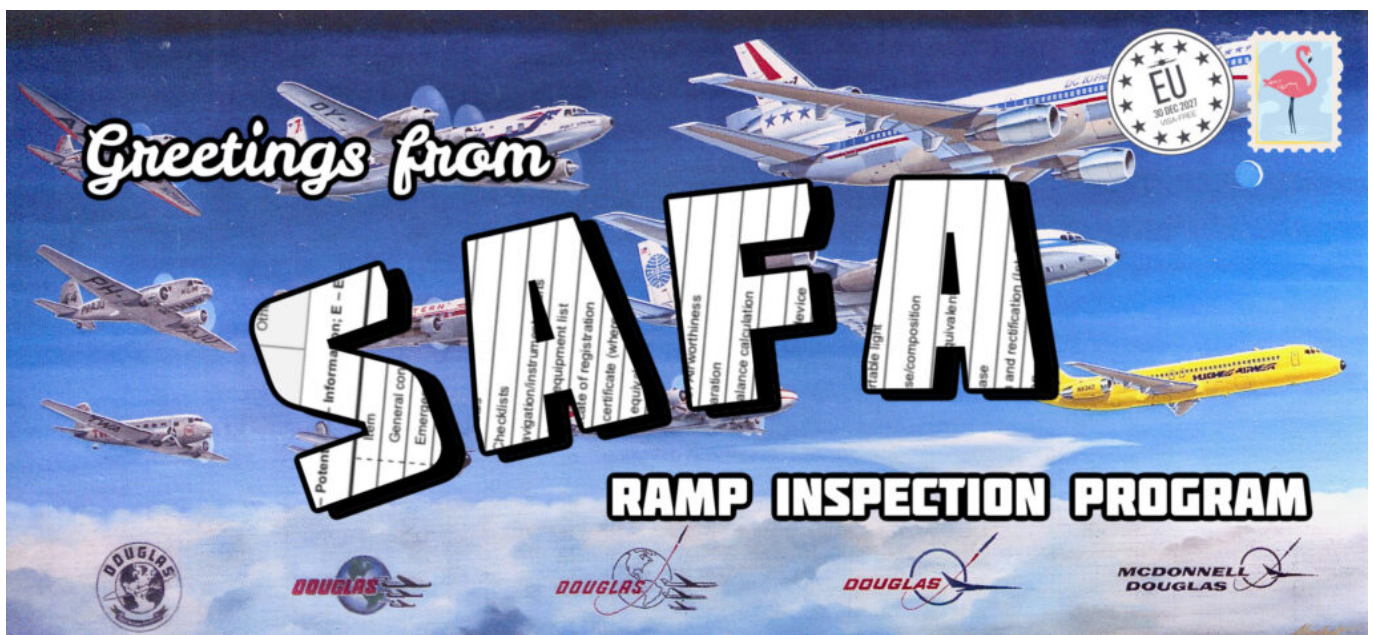
Some interesting points:

- The Inspectors can ask you for manuals, documents, or guidance - but they are not supposed to test your knowledge of procedures, regulations, or technical matters. **This doesn't always happen in practice** - so if you get a tough question - just say "I don't know" - and let them note it if they want to. This isn't a classroom test.
- This guidance is given to Inspectors: Delaying an operator for a non-safety related issue is not only frustrating to the operator, it also could result in unwanted human factor issues with possible negative effects on the flight preparation. **They can (should) only delay your flight**

for a safety related issue.

- Remember, it's not you that's being inspected. It's your aircraft. If you're uncomfortable with the questions, get them noted and allow your operator to discuss later.
- **Every inspector is a little different.** Work with them and you'll find that 90% of your ramp checks will be over in 20 minutes with little issue.
- Private Operators - especially in GA (even more so under the 5700kg mark) - are **far less likely to get ramp checked.** EASA guidelines do apply to General Aviation, but they are far more interested in Commercial Operators.
- The items checked during ramp checks are based on a risk based approach and can differ from operator to operator (for example depending on findings raised during previous inspections). Meaning that operators who get ramp checked with findings will most likely **get ramp checked again**, to see if they've sorted out the problems!
- EASA regulations requiring **alcohol testing** during ramp checks will take effect across all SAFA countries in **Aug 2020**. But some countries have already started doing this: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, UK, and Singapore. More info

Common Findings:



See article: **SAFA Ramp Checks: The Top 5 Offenders**

Ramp checks cover **52 inspection items** spread over 5 areas: **flight deck, cabin, aircraft condition, cargo, and general/other.**

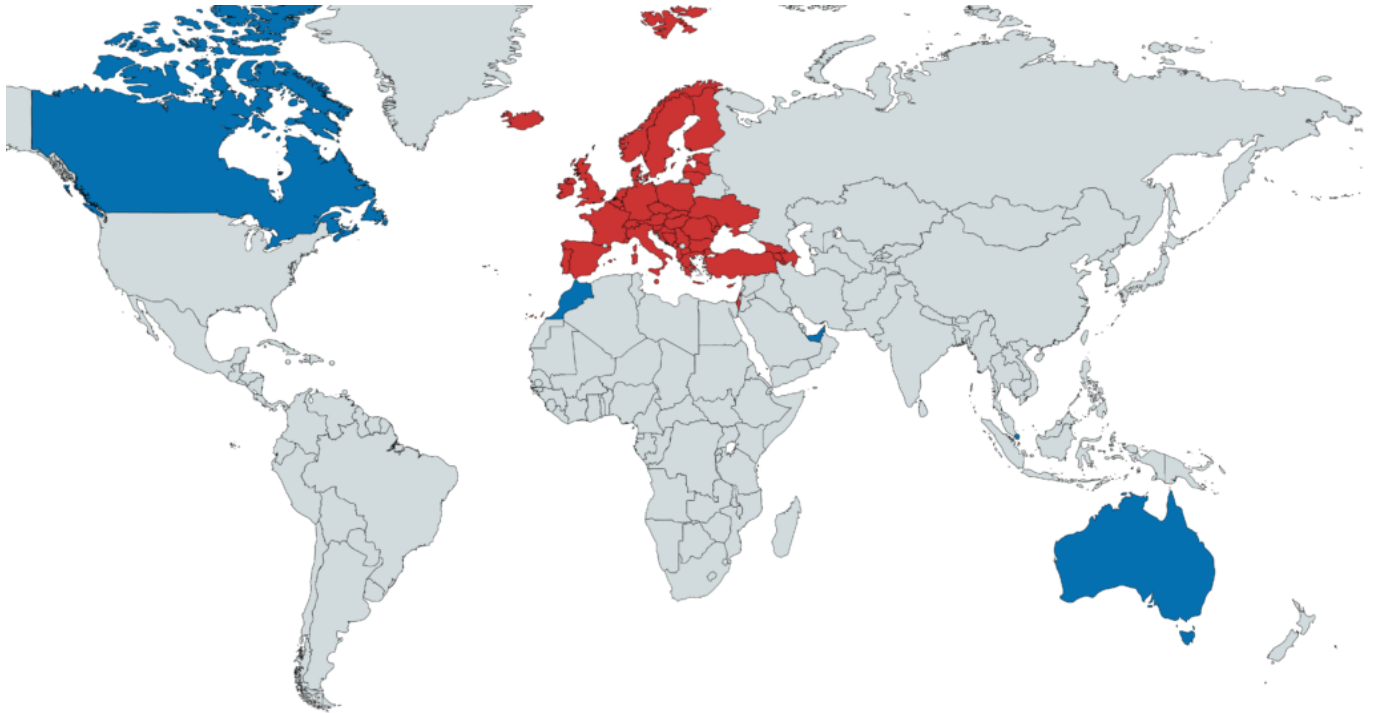
But some of those 52 items generate more findings than others. A DSAC/IS-BAO study found that the **top inspection items by number of CAT2 and CAT3 findings for business aviation** were these ones:

1. Flight preparation (RI checklist item A13)
2. Mass and balance calculations (A14)
3. Manuals (A04)
4. MEL (A07)
5. Checklists (A05)

6. Defect notification and rectification (A23)
7. Navigation/instrument charts (A06)

So essentially, these findings all relate to five key areas: **Flight Planning, Documents, Defects, Charts, Cabin Safety**. Get these right, and your “sweatin over a ramp checkin” days are over, partner!

The Countries:



The 49 Participating States engaged in the EU Ramp Inspections Programme are:

Europe: Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Republic of North Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, and United Kingdom.

Rest of world: Canada, Morocco, Singapore, United Arab Emirates.

The Checklist:



Ramp Inspection Checklist (SAFA)

DOC NO OPG/SAFA-CL
 REV 07
 DATED 01JUN2020
 PAGE 1 OF 3

Operator	Date	Flight No.	Location	Aircraft Type	Registration No.
Captain	Cert. No.	First Officer	Other Crew	Lead F/A	Inspector

S – Satisfactory; U – Unsatisfactory; P – Potential; I – Information; E – Exceeds; N – Not Observed

	Code	Item	Checked	Remarks	
A. Flight Deck	A01	General condition			
	A02	Emergency exit			
	A03	Equipment			
	Documentation	A04	Manuals		
		A05	Checklists		
		A06	Navigation/instrument charts		
		A07	Minimum equipment list		
		A08	Certificate of registration		
		A09	Noise certificate (where applicable)		
		A10	AOC or equivalent		
		A11	Radio license		
		A12	Certificate of Airworthiness		
Flight Data	A13	Flight preparation			
	A14	Mass and balance calculation			
Safety Equipment	A15	Hand fire extinguishers			
	A16	Life jackets / floatation device			
	A17	Harness			
	A18	Oxygen equipment			
	A19	Independent portable light			
Flight Crew	A20	Flight crew license/composition			
Journey Log Book / Technical Log or Equivalent	A21	Journey log book or equivalent			
	A22	Maintenance release			
	A23	Defect notification and rectification (Int. Tech Log)			
	A24	Preflight inspection			
	B. Safety / Cabin	B01	General internal condition		
B02		Cabin crew station and crew rest area			
B03		First aid kit / emergency medical kit			
B04		Hand fire extinguishers			
B05		Life jackets / floatation device			
B06		Seat belts and seat condition			
B07		Emergency exit, lighting and independent portable light			
B08		Slides / life-rafts (as required), ELT			
B09		Oxygen supply (cabin crew and passengers)			
B10		Safety instructions			

Download by clicking above, or here: [Opsgroup Ramp Checklist](#)

If you want to delve deep into each item on this checklist to find out exactly what inspectors should be looking for, check out this document published by EASA in Sept 2019, which has the inspection instructions in full. For all things Ramp Inspection Program related, check EASA's dedicated webpage here.