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## DGCA Audit Flags 51 Safety Violations at Air India Amid Heightened Industry Scrutiny

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A comprehensive audit conducted in July 2025 by India's aviation regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), identified 51 safety violations at Air India, highlighting significant operational and training deficiencies. These findings arrive amid intensified scrutiny of the airline following the June crash of Flight AI171, though the audit was not directly linked to that incident.

According to the confidential 111-page report, seven serious “Level I” breaches required remedial action by July 30, while the remaining 44 issues must be addressed by August 23. Key concerns included recurrent training gaps for pilots flying Boeing 787 and 777 aircraft, widespread use of unapproved flight simulators, and a deficient crew rostering system that failed to alert when flights flew without adequate cabin staff.

Additional violations included inadequate route risk assessments for Category C airports’ airfields with challenging terrain or runways, where simulators used did not meet regulatory standards, a scenario the DGCA warned could compromise safety during approaches.

The audit also uncovered inconsistencies in pre-flight checks: emergency equipment inspections, door safety protocols, and training documentation showed frequent lapses, undermining accountability within flight operations. In response, Air India stated it maintained full transparency during the audit and committed to submitting corrective plans within the prescribed deadlines. This audit follows DGCA notices issued in late July highlighting 29 violations over the past two years, related to crew fatigue, insufficient simulator training, and understaffed international flights. The agency has warned of possible enforcement actions, including fines or administrative orders against senior airline executives.

The DGCA’s findings extend beyond Air India to expose broader systemic weaknesses across India’s aviation sector. A post-crash “360-degree” audit uncovered safety breaches across airline operations and major airport infrastructure, such as worn tyres, faded runway markings, faulty ground-handling gear, and outdated pilot training systems.

These developments place pressure on Air India, now owned by the Tata Group, to rapidly enhance compliance standards. Questions regarding operational accountability, regulatory oversight, and enforcement capability have gained urgency, especially as Air India positions itself to expand globally.

The audit has prompted calls from industry and safety experts for more regular and rigorous compliance audits and centralised oversight to ensure India’s fast-growing aviation sector keeps pace with international safety norms.