

CABIN CREW FEEDBACK

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EDITORIAL

Some cabin crewmembers will be aware that confidential reporting of human factors related incidents has been available to flight deck crews for some 20 years. More recently the Programme has been extended to Air Traffic Control Officers and Ground Engineers.

CAA (Safety Regulation Group has agreed to the Programme being extended to Cabin Crew on a one-year trial basis. Detailed information on the CHIRP Programme is being circulated through management, representative bodies and training organisations. If you have not received any of this information and would like to know more about the Programme, you can visit our web site, or contact us by any of the methods shown at the foot of this page.

The success of this initiative is dependent on you and your colleagues. We will represent safety-related concerns reported to us, confidentially, and with the agreement of the individual reporter to permit the matter to be reviewed in the most appropriate way.

The following reports are examples from our database:

EMERGENCY EXITS

Recently I was positioning on a ### sitting in the emergency exit seat aft of the wing. When the aircraft was on the ground a locking pin with a red tail was inserted in the arming lever for the emergency escape slide. The red tail had the instruction on it "Ground Use only". Prior to pushback the pin was removed, the door armed and the pin placed (in a reinforced retaining hole with the end protruding) on the emergency exit door with the tail still visible and readable.

I have never flown on this type before, however, I have always understood that the pins of the type used (similar to landing gear pins) are for engineering purposes and not for operational use. Furthermore, I would question whether it is right that with passengers boarding and on an aircraft, that the emergency exit slide be locked in the disarmed position by a sharp-edged engineering pin with a flag on it with an instruction "ground use only" that is permanently visible

This recent report has been passed to CAA (SRG) to permit the matter to be reviewed with the operator.

PRESSURE TO OPERATE

For the past two years I have been employed as a senior cabin crewmember for ##.

operates a system whereby cabin crew are issued a yearly set of "points". If a crewmember has a day or days off sick, points are deducted from the individual's total. This adversely affects the crewmembers' ability to choose exactly when they can book their leave. The fewer points an individual has, the less choice is available.

Clearly this system encourages individuals to go to work when they are unfit to do so. In spite of the unpopularity of this system and the obviousness of its consequences, the company refuses to drop it.

Some months ago, the cabin crew at ## received a memo from the Cabin Crew Manager instructing any crew member taking any sick leave in that month, to provide a Doctor's Certificate, at the individual's own cost. If this measure was not adhered to then "disciplinary action" would be taken. (Before seven days sickness, law requires no doctor's note. After seven days the issue of a Doctors Certificate is free).

I was one such individual who took five days off after picking up the then prevalent 'flu virus. I refused to buy the doctor's note on the basis that this is not a legal requirement before seven days. I was subsequently docked one-day's pay from my salary.

It hardly needs to be said that the nature of flying is such that there is an increased susceptibility to picking-up illness, especially considering the unsocial hours, foreign night stops, pressurised cabins etc. However, at ## it is commonplace to be rostered five, six or seven days consecutively with minimum rest in between. The company's short duration turnarounds exclude the possibility of cabin crew resting or eating at all between flights and our day's work regularly consists of four or five sectors (10-12 hours).

It would seem grossly unfair in these circumstances to penalise those individuals who find themselves run down and sick and to pressurise them into operating when unfit to do so and so jeopardise their personal health and the safety of ## passengers.

The general concerns were taken up with the operator. During these discussions, the airline to which this report refers ceased operations.

Cabin Crew FEEDBACK is available on the internet at www.chirp.co.uk

A Cabin Crew Safety Newsletter

from the Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme

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