

CABIN CREW FEEDBACK

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BACK ISSUES

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NEED TO CONTACT US?

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REPORTS

DISCRETION/CREW REPORT TIMES

One of the decisions an Aircraft Commander has to make periodically, is whether to exercise his discretion to extend an allowed Flight Duty Period. Many factors influence this decision, and it is right that, on the day, the decision is left with the commander having taken account of individual crew members' circumstances. One of the many factors a commander will take into account is the flight duty start time.

I am concerned that my company is distorting the basis Commanders are working to, by making cabin crew report for duty before their official report time, so that they can carry out tasks which junior managers believe should be completed before duty 'proper' starts. Such tasks include: checking in suitcases for

long-haul flights, reading and signing for crew notices, check counting personal floats, counting and declaring personal money (an anti-fraud measure), and pursers and number 2s preparing pre-flight briefings. Are these tasks not Duty?

Cabin crew are, therefore, being required to report for duty 20-30 minutes or more before their official FDP start time. This has gone so far that Cabin Crew Duty Managers are requiring In-Charge to make negative punctuality comments in personal appraisals if crew members are not at work well in advance of the report time shown on their roster.

A Flight Duty time is just that. How can I make educated decisions on the safe conduct of a flight if crew members are having arbitrary, unofficial report times imposed without my knowledge?

The basis for Report times was discussed with CAA (SRG) Flight Operations Department, who provided the following response:

CAP 371 states that planned schedules must allow for flights to be completed within the Maximum Flying Duty Period (FDP) and that this must take into account time required for pre-flight duties, which must be reflected in the Standard Report Time.

The FDP starts when the crew member is required by the Operator to report (for duty) before a flight.

A Duty Period is any continuous period during which a crew member is required to carry out any task associated with the business of an aircraft operator.

As a result any task necessarily carried out prior to the flight departure forms part of the specified FDP and must be reflected in the Standard Report Time specified in the Operator's FTL Scheme.

Such tasks will include checking of personal cash and floats, briefing of in-flight duties and reading any pertinent Crew notices. Those providing such briefings may have prepared such briefing material during a previous Duty.

The checking-in of personal luggage, when undertaking long haul flights, arises from the nature

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from the Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme

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of the flight and as such forms part of the pre-flight duties.

Obviously Operators will have differing procedures for crew luggage check-in, dependent on the crew office location. However, it is expected that Operators would be attempting to streamline crew luggage check-in procedures as part of the pre-flight tasks, without putting the onus on crews to artificially shorten Standard Report Times.

It should be remembered that Standard Report Times are based on the average time required to complete pre-flight duties. In some individual circumstances, such as part-time staff returning after a period of absence or crew members returning from a period of leave or sickness, additional time might be required for those crewmembers to assure themselves that they are familiar with information promulgated during their period of absence. This is an individual responsibility.

CABIN LIGHTING TOO BRIGHT

We recently had a technical problem down route where all the cabin lighting remained bright during the [night] flight. The problem was known while the aircraft was still on the ground. When I asked both the In Charge and the Captain regarding an emergency and how my eyes would adjust and see the outside hazards (in the case of an evacuation) I was told by both people that this was not reason enough to stop a flight from leaving.

Could you let me know if that is really true?

This goes against our SEP rules..

Dimming of lights is not an Airworthiness Requirement and is only a recommended procedure in CAP 360 Part One. Consequently, the failure described in this report would not prevent an aircraft from despatching.

It should be noted that the JAR 25.803 emergency evacuation demonstration test for aircraft type certification is conducted in darkness of night conditions, with the cabin going from full lighting to emergency lighting and then the evacuation into a darkened hangar.

DISCRETION

I was rostered to report for an early morning departure for a multi-sector duty. Prior to leaving

home, the check in time was delayed by more than one hour. On checking in, there was a further technical delay.

The cabin crew discussed the effect of the delays on our hours and I informed the Captain of our concerns; informed by Captain that hours were not a problem for another two hours.

Two hours later, the passengers were boarding; one of the flight crew told a cabin crewmember in the forward galley that we were in Discretion by five minutes.

We subsequently departed and completed the sequence. On landing back at base, I checked the Voyage Report as felt I needed to clarify our hours. The Discretion Box was ticked to say that the crew were informed of Discretion by Captain and discussed. As the Captain had gone home, I queried this with the First Officer as the In Charge or several other crew members had not been informed. He said he too was annoyed as he was not consulted either.

My understanding is that Discretion cannot be entered into ex-UK is this correct?

It is apparent from the number of cabin crew reports on this topic that CHIRP has received that a significant number of cabin crew members are unclear as to how and when Discretion may be exercised. Moreover, a frequent complaint is that they are not advised that Discretion has been exercised on their behalf.

CAP 371 requires that a Commander "take note of the circumstances of other members of the crew" prior to extending a Flight Duty Period. There is no requirement for an individual discussion with other members of the crew, and it is sometimes the case that a Commander will be required to make a decision based on his understanding of other crew member's circumstances. However, good CRM principles would require that, subsequent to the decision being made, all other crew members be made aware of the Commander's decision.

As regards the reporter's final query, CAP 371 permits up to two hours discretion to be exercised prior to leaving the departure airfield on a two or more sector flight and up to three hours immediately prior to the final sector of a multi-sector flight or leaving the initial departure airfield on a single sector flight.

DIFFERENCES IN OPERATING PROCEDURES

I am employed as an In Charge with ### based at ### Airport. I am seeking your advice regarding the current ruling which to say the least is rather alarming.

I operate on two aircraft types. I also operate on the same aircraft type but for one of our foreign subsidiaries with their [non-UK] flight deck crew.

We attended a very intense training course, however, their policies and emergency procedures are very different to my Company's. It can be rather confusing at times during the very busy summer season changing from one to the other.

The original ruling was that crew must have 34 hours in between the operating of either company aircraft, however we never had anything in writing from the company. This then changed to 72 hours in between changing aircraft, again nothing in writing. Now it is 24 hours, surely these rulings should be put into force by the CAA or the Foreign Operators' Aviation Regulations and why so many changes?

I and many of my colleagues are very concerned over this issue. There is already confusion regarding issues like contacting the flight deck with each operator using a different method.

We have previously operated with the foreign operators' cabin crew but they are only ever allowed to operate on one of the operator's aircraft and not both.

This matter was raised with the Company who confirmed that the minimum time between operating for each operator was 24 hours, this had been agreed with the overseas Regulator who had issued a special dispensation to allow this practice to continue. The Company agreed to issue a written notice to their cabin crew.

The Company also elected to amend the procedures for contacting the flight deck, to establish a common SOP for both operators.

CAA FODCOM 14/2002 provides guidance on this topic and is available on the CAA Website at www.srg.caa.co.uk

The FODCOM states "cabin crew should be limited to operating concurrently with a maximum of two AOC Holders at any one time". Where cabin crew are operating concurrently with two AOC Holders they should normally be limited to one aircraft type or variant of the type with each operator. In addition consideration should be given to a senior cabin crew member of Operator B operating as part of the crew when crew from Operator A are used".

MRE: MEALS, READY TO (H)EAT

This article was taken from the NASA CALLBACK newsletter (Aviation Safety Reporting System) March 2003 Issue:

Quick action by an MD-80 Cabin Crew dampened a passenger's unauthorised attempt to heat and eat:

The #4 Flight Attendant was the first person to detect a burning plastic smell... I walked up a few rows and then noticed the same smell she was describing. We immediately called the cockpit and then checked out the galley area and lavatories. While I stayed in the aft portion of the cabin, the #4 Flight Attendant went out to pick up trash and to see if the smell was apparent throughout the cabin. In the aft part of the plane we all smelled it and then noticed smoke coming from the trash bag that the #4 Flight Attendant had just brought back... Smoke was coming from an airsickness bag. We carefully opened it slightly and noticed a Styrofoam cup and a Military, Meals, Ready to Eat (MRE) heating bag. A military passenger told another Flight Attendant that he was using it to cook the food he had brought on board. We dumped the MRE heating device into a lavatory sink full of cold water, covered it with ice, and then locked the lavatory. It was still hot one and one-half hours later on landing. The passenger said he had done this before on other flights ...

Whilst this report relates to a flight in the US, it is becoming more common for passengers on UK flights to provide their own refreshments.

Some self-heating food/drink products can be purchased in the UK. Although not classified as Dangerous Goods, their use in flight would not be advisable.

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