

CABIN CREW FEEDBACK

No: 12

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EDITORIAL

CHIRP SURVEY

May I take this opportunity to thank those of you who have taken the time to return the CHIRP Surveys which were distributed with the last issue of CABIN CREW FEEDBACK; as mentioned in the last issue, your views are very important. We have received some very useful comments, all of which will be made available to the Independent Review Board. A summary of the survey results and the Review Board findings will be published in the next issue.

I would like to clarify several points arising from the survey. The first is the *complete independence* of CHIRP. We are not part of any company scheme and we are not tied to any union, association or other interest group.

The second is that CHIRP has no regulatory or executive authority and therefore is not able to enforce any changes to operations. However, the Cabin Crew Advisory Board includes representatives from the Cabin Safety Office CAA (SRG) and thus they are aware of issues raised by reporters and the views of other Board members.

Thirdly, as many Survey responses have asked for follow-up information to reports which have appeared in CCFB, we will provide this in future issues whenever possible. However, we cannot insist that action is taken and sometimes are unable to ascertain when and whether it has been. This is because, when we have progressed a report as far as is possible, we return the reporter's details together with a summary of the action we have taken. Consequently, we cannot contact a reporter subsequently to establish whether there has been an improvement. If you have reported an incident and you have noticed changes as a result of your report, please let us know and we will publish a follow-up.

Finally, please note that you will always receive a response from CHIRP to a report you submit. If you hear nothing from us please don't assume we are ignoring your report - we just haven't received it!

Kirsty Arnold
Cabin Crew Programme Manager

REPORTS

MORE ON POSITIONING FLIGHTS

I was called from standby (standby having commenced one hour previously) to report approximately two hours later. I was informed I would be operating fire cover (this is not defined in any Company Manuals) on the aircraft for an empty sector from AAA to BBB (Mediterranean).

When I arrived in the crew room there were a number of other crew members who had been asked to report for this flight. Their standbys had commenced earlier in the day. These crew members were to position on the aircraft to BBB as passengers and work to CCC (UK). We were then to taxi back to AAA. We arrived back at AAA the next day.

I believe it was the Company's intention to position the five crew members to BBB to stop them exceeding FDP limitations. If this was the case then I would have expected a crew complement of four (minimum) to carry the passengers as per CAA Regulations.

If the only passengers on board were company employees and the aircraft carried no freight other than company freight then it was not a public transport flight and was not required to carry a cabin crew member to look after the 'passengers' (as required by Article 20(7) of the ANO).

The positioning crewmembers would have commenced their Flight Duty Period (FDP) when reporting for the positioning flight but the flight would not have counted as an operating sector. For the reporter, who was allocated safety duties, the flight was an operating sector and was accountable as such for FDP purposes.

DISCRETION

(1) FROM ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

I am writing to you in the hope that you might provide a definitive answer to an ongoing operational query

A Cabin Crew Safety Newsletter

from the Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme

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regarding the rights of a captain to refuse to exercise Discretion to extend a crew's duty period.

Recently I was asked to operate a straightforward two-sector day, from AAA to BBB and return. My report time was 0600 local. The cabin crew, who reported 30 minutes earlier, were rostered to operate an additional two sectors, with fresh flight crew, on the completion of the first two sectors.

Based upon a simple interpretation of the Flight Time Limitations, the cabin crew were only legally able to operate the last two sectors as a result of a note, which permits the cabin crew to work to the flight time limitations of the flight deck if these are less limiting.

As I was only operating two sectors, the cabin crew, who might according to their four-sector day with an early report only have been able to operate a 10¾ hour day, (by merit of this technicality) they were now able to work to a 12¼ hour duty day (mine) - my duty period being less limiting than theirs.

Flying inbound from BBB, my homeward sector, (but the cabin crew's second of four) the company contacted me and asked if the cabin crew would accept an extension of duty of approximately one hour, as the next outbound flight was delayed.

I consulted with the crew in an open, sympathetic and constructive fashion and heard their viewpoints.

Based upon:

The fact that at least two of the crew were in the middle of seven-day duty periods.

The cabin crew's early start time.

The crew had only been able to operate the four sectors by merit of being able to extend their maximum FDP to that of the original flight deck.

The extension that had been requested was based on an estimated time of departure for the cabin crew's next sector.

A new captain was due to operate the two additional sectors giving rise to some ambiguity as to which captain should be making the decision to go into discretion.

My own view, supported by CAA guidance, is that discretion should be used only in exceptional cases and not as a matter of routine. I also understood that discretion was intended as a means to "get you home" when things had gone awry with schedules, due to unforeseen circumstances. It should not be used routinely to cushion impractical and unrealistic scheduling.

My decision was to decline the discretion and the company were informed of this decision. This was the first time I have taken a decision not to permit the extension of duty and for the reasons given I feel that the

decision was balanced, fair and considered. I was deeply disappointed and disturbed to learn that the In Charge, almost immediately on return to base had been taken into a private office by a cabin crew manager for an "interview", giving the opportunity to explain their actions. By the In Charge's account, the meeting was little more than a hectoring "b*****ing". Quite clearly there is a culture whereby the use of the Captain's discretion not to extend a duty may be treated as a failure on the part of the crew to stand by their employer.... an act of disloyalty.

I had considered that terms such as "adequately rested" are open to various interpretations. If a crew is not "adequately rested" it could be argued that they should not have reported for duty at all. De facto, if they do report for duty they can be considered fit for any variation that might arise? This would be the company's viewpoint.

In this case, I do wonder under what circumstances the company might see it reasonable for a crew to decline to work into discretion? This case, as described, was the most glaringly obvious example of such a situation in my entire flying career, when the rights and decision of the captain, on behalf of his crew, should have been seen to be upheld by the company, and not diminished.

I would be very interested to hear of the CAA's/CHIRP's interpretation of the rules based upon this example.

This report was submitted by a Captain on the subject of Discretion. We hope that the report and the CAA comments below provide you with an understanding of the Captain's point of view. The reporter's comment that Discretion is intended as a means to "get you home" is not correct. A Captain may exercise Discretion on any sector in accordance with an Operator's Approved FTL scheme, but may only exercise the full Discretion (CAP 371 permits a maximum of 3 hours) prior to commencing last or only sector in a Flight Duty Period.

CAA (SRG) provided the following response:

In the circumstances described by this reporter, the decision on whether or not to use discretion to extend the cabin crew FDP could only have been made by the commander who would be operating with the cabin crew when the extended FDP needed to be applied.

If an operator wishes to question a commander's justification for using or for not using discretion, then it is the commander who should be accountable after the event. (Whenever discretion is used, the commander must always submit a written report anyway, recording reasons why the planned FDP was insufficient.)

The flight time limitations rules published in CAP 371 allow for the cabin crew FDP to be based upon the FDP applicable to the flight crew with whom they will start

operating: this ensures that an FDP based upon the cabin crew Standard Report Time is not the limiting factor. CAP 371 also specifies that a cabin crew FDP can be up to one hour longer than the flight crew FDP. As a result, cabin crew and flight crew can then work together throughout the flight crew FDP, facilitating good crew resource management (CRM).

In the situation described above, an acclimatised flight crew report time of 0600hrs local would allow them 12¼ hrs FDP in which to operate two sectors. As the cabin crew had been rostered to operate four sectors, their FDP would have been 11¼ hrs: this is based upon their first flight crew's start time of 0600hrs (10¾ hrs), plus the one hour allowed by CAP 371.

(2) WHOSE DECISION?

Crew reported for duty at 0610 to operate a six sector day AAA - BBB - AAA - CCC - AAA - DDD - AAA . I had been called off my standby which commenced at 0500.

Initially we were delayed for over two hours and took off at 0915am and arrived back in AAA from BBB three hours later.

We departed for CCC at 1230pm, whereby our Captain informed us that he had spoken to Crewing and told them that no crew were prepared to go into Discretion to operate AAA-DDD-AAA. We arrived back from CCC at approximately 1515 and were about to disembark to find only new flight deck crew and no replacement cabin crew. On realising this, we called Crewing who advised us that there was no cabin crew to do the flight, we then told them we were not prepared to go into Discretion. Once again we got ready to disembark and finish our duty.

It then appeared that Operations had contacted our ground handling company and told them we were to operate AAA-DDD and then either night stop or passenger back empty. Basically we felt that we were being forced into Discretion. With much reluctance we operated the flight to DDD. We departed at 1555 - 9 ½ hours into our flight duty time. Therefore we only had one hour to operate the flight to DDD and back which is not possible.

Could you advise me if we should have been forced into Discretion?

It is not in the cabin crew's remit to exercise Discretion. The reporter doesn't mention whether the commander, in making the decision to exercise their Discretion considered that this was a safe course of action, reflecting the length of duty already undertaken by the cabin crew.

This report was forwarded to CAA (SRG); subsequently a copy was provided to the Flight Operations Inspector responsible for overseeing this Company's operation.

Since the reporter was on standby at 0500, his/her Duty Period started at that time. The report time of 0610 gives an allowable FDP of 9 hr 30 (plus one hour for cabin crew) giving 10 hr 30. This means the FDP should have ended at 1640 hrs.

With a departure outbound of 1555 then the flight was undertaken based on the certainty that the cabin crew would exceed their allowable FDP.

As it turned out, subsequent delays meant that the cabin crew could not operate the return flight and the aircraft had to return empty with a replacement aircraft and crew.

SEVERE TURBULENCE

After take-off, the cabin crew were released by flight crew to commence duties and to start setting up the cabin service. Passengers were seated with seat belt signs on.

As turbulence was becoming increasingly more serious, In Charge advised the crew and helped to secure the galleys (only unsecured area) as passenger seatbelt signs were still illuminated.

The aircraft dropped unexpectedly resulting in the cabin crew being thrown to the ceiling and subsequently on to the floor, seatbacks or passengers depending on cabin crew location in the cabin. I managed to secure myself in the crew seat though I felt dizzy and gasping for air.

Cabin crew checked themselves first and then passengers. Passengers were concerned about the structural soundness of the plane. A cabin report was passed to flight deck by In Charge. Cabin crew dealt with pax, calmed and reassured others.

The ongoing severe turbulence lasted 10 minutes.

At the debrief after the flight I asked the flight crew why we were not told to get strapped in and pilot replied that he was too busy keeping the aircraft under control.

Comments about what I learnt about this experience:

When In Charge advised crew to suspend cabin service duties because of turbulence becoming severe, cabin crew engaged themselves in securing the aircraft leaving them little time to look to their own safety and security. Moreover, the operations manual does not state anything about how quickly turbulence can become severe or about the aircraft dropping in altitude following severe turbulence.

As a suggestion, a code of best practice should be drafted in this case scenario and maybe in the case of other related adverse weather conditions.

In spite of all of the aids/information available to flight crew, unforeseen encounters with moderate/severe turbulence can and do occur, even in clear air, therefore, it would be hard to draft a code of best practice taking such extremes into account. Fortunately, occurrences such as that described are rare. There are also times when the effects of turbulence are more pronounced at the rear of the aircraft than at the front and thus the flight crew might be unaware of it.

We recommend that the In Charge assess the level of turbulence being experienced in the cabin and when necessary, inform the flight crew and request the fasten seat belt signs to be switched on. If the level of turbulence warrants it, discontinue non-safety related duties; the passenger cabin and other applicable areas should then be secured. The JAR-OPS rules relating to the responsibility of cabin crew in relation to turbulence are currently under review.

In the case above, a quick call from the flight deck instructing the cabin crew to strap-in would have been helpful.

trouble. The Captain was informed but said it didn't matter as it would delay the flight and he wanted to go.

The potential safety implications of inadequate restraint and emergency oxygen provision are obvious. The number of babies should have been identified at the time of booking the flights and, if the Company had procedures for the use of car seats, these should also have been explained at the time. Notwithstanding this, the ground staff should have dealt with this matter at Check-in and not left the cabin crew to bear the brunt of the passengers' displeasure when this situation could have been easily avoided.

We have been made aware of a number of similar occurrences of two adults boarding with triplets with other passengers subsequently being approached to hold the third child - so beware!

We have written to the ground handling agents of the principal UK operators requesting their check-in staff be made aware of such situations involving multiple infants in the future. The letter also included the handling of child buggies and oversized hand luggage.

TOO MANY INFANTS?

LESS HASTE, MORE SOPs

The final passengers to board were a mother, father and triplet babies. They sat down and had one baby on each lap and then placed the third baby on a seat using the normal seat belt. My colleague and I asked whether another adult was on the way or whether the family had a car seat to restrain baby 3 and were told that the ground staff had said it was okay for the baby to be put in a seat with a regular seat belt. The father then told us that the check in staff had said the "crew might not like that idea and to ask around for another passenger to hold baby 3". We said that was not acceptable and that we would have to inform the In Charge and Captain.

Positioning as passenger on ###. Occupying aisle seat front row left-hand side of 737, i.e. directly opposite cabin crew on their jump seats. During landing roll (with reverse still operating above idle so presumably still above 80knots) young steward sitting opposite me stood up and put on his tabard ready to disembark pax on apron! If the aircraft had braked suddenly or lurched he would have been flung around.

A lot of discussion then ensued with the father becoming aggressive towards the In Charge when told he may not be able to travel. The ground staff were summoned to explain why they had allowed the family through. The check-in clerk admitted they knew it was wrong but thought we could be flexible. The Dispatcher was unaware of the problem. After a lot of loud discussion between the Captain, In Charge and family the Captain made the decision to allow the family to ask another passenger (a complete stranger) to hold baby 3. The In Charge had checked the Cabin Crew Manual and it quite specifically says that 3 babies travelling with 2 adults is acceptable if one baby is restrained in a car seat.

Do we even need to comment?!

Cabin crew should remain seated during critical phases of the flight which includes while the aircraft is taxiing (except for safety related duties). Cabin crew are responsible for the safety of all on board, including themselves and should comply with SOPs.

Please don't put yourself at such risk that you endanger your own safety and consequently the ability to fulfil your responsibilities.

For more detailed information please refer to CAP 360 Part One, Chapter 6, Page 24.

When I looked at the Passenger List I saw that the family were listed as travelling with only 2 infants and not 3, I questioned the father about this and he told me the check-in clerk said he had put 2 infants to save the family

BACK ISSUES

Back issues of CABIN CREW FEEDBACK are available on our website: www.chirp.co.uk
