

CHIRP FEEDBACK

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EDITORIAL

The **CHIRP** Cabin Crew Advisory Board meets regularly to review disidentified reports presented by **CHIRP** staff, to advise the latter how they might handle the issues and concerns described by reporters. One theme surfaces often in many of these reports: poor communications on board aircraft, frequently leaving reporters unsure in their mind whether or not they were right to speak out. To be fair, there have also been reports where good communications have been mentioned because of the positive outcome, and of course in most operations it is likely that good communications are the norm.

Good and effective communication between all those involved in dispatching and operating aircraft is the lynch-pin of crew resource management, and it is a potential 'life-saver' when all is not or does not seem right. By being receptive to concerns expressed by colleagues - ice observed on the wing before take-off, unidentified odours, inexplicable noises, non-compliance with essential safety and security procedures, etc - all crew members can support their colleagues, helping to make them feel valued as professionals and reducing the risk of potentially serious incidents. Confidence in speaking one's mind when the need arises and a readiness to listen and to provide feedback are all it takes to help encourage good communication between individuals. Remember, it matters not what job you do in or around aircraft - flight safety is **your** business, and promoting good communications goes a long way towards achieving this goal!

Tim Sindall
Chairman of the Cabin Crew Advisory Board

Number of Reports Received 01.04.06 - 23.06.06:

56

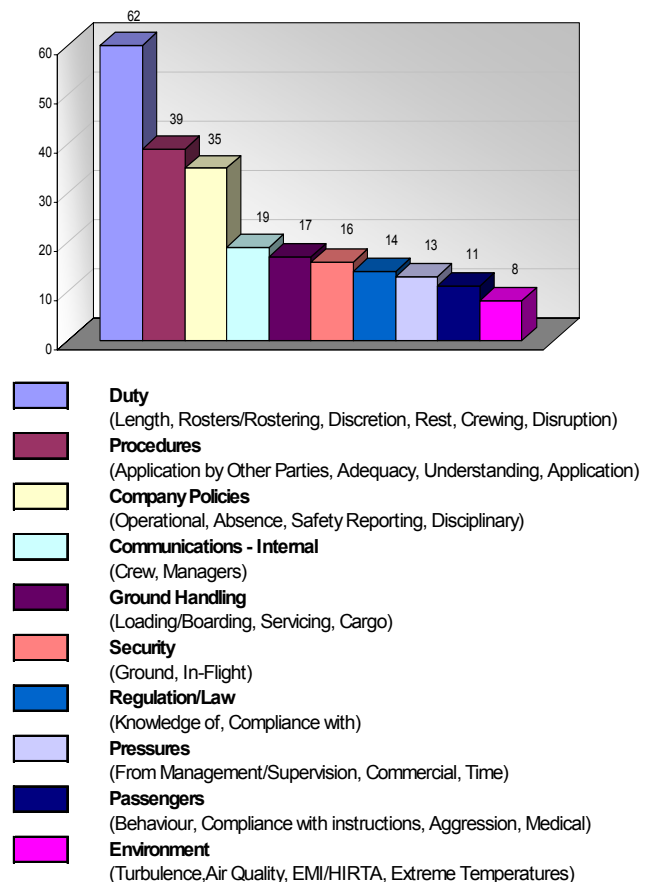
Topics Have Included:

Intoxicated Pax
Cabin Baggage
Rostering to Red Sea Resorts
Infant Seatbelts

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Most Frequent Cabin Crew Issues Received 12 Months Ending May 2006



CABIN CREW FEEDBACK is also available on the **CHIRP** website - www.chirp.co.uk

A Cabin Crew Safety Newsletter

from **CHIRP** the Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme

REPORTS

INTOXICATED PAX

Report Text: Two passengers boarded obviously worse for wear with alcohol. Cabin crew continued to serve both pax with brandy/whisky miniatures, they were both very loud and used foul language, though they were not violent.

Near top of descent a cabin crew member had to help one of the pax to strap-in for landing as they were too far gone to do it themselves.

Flight safety is paramount and had either of these pax been violent the cabin crew would have had a big problem.

My points are:

1. They should not have been allowed to board in that state
2. They should not have been served drinks in that state
3. The amount of alcohol served to them in a short period.

The attitude from the In-Charge was poor, more driven by profit rather than safety.

CHIRP Comment: This incident was raised with the operator concerned who was appreciative of the information. The operator confirmed that their procedures included assessing passengers before they boarded an aircraft; thereafter cabin crew were encouraged to continually assess passengers to ensure they did not become intoxicated.

The operator has re-emphasised to cabin crew the importance of accurate assessment of passengers' suitability to be served alcohol along with the importance of ensuring passengers are not encouraged to drink excessively on board.

Assessing whether a passenger is unfit to travel is often very difficult and can often be a judgement call by the In-Charge. The Air Navigation Order states that a person shall not enter any aircraft when drunk, or be drunk on any aircraft; a number of operators have clear policies on assessing a passenger's fitness to travel as part of their corporate risk management process.

From a cabin crew perspective, best practice would be to remain vigilant during cabin patrols.

COLLECTION OF PRE-PAID ALLOWANCES

Report Text: At present the In-Charge is expected to collect long haul allowances for all crew (cabin and flight) that are operating on their flight - before the report time for their duty. The allowances are collected from the bureau exchange which is some distance from the crew room, the exchange can also be extremely busy. In-Charge's need to give themselves 30 minutes before check-in to ensure that they have enough time to complete this. How

does this affect the In-Charge's hours and is there a fair expectation of the company to require one member of a crew operating the same duty hours as everyone else to start 30 minutes earlier?

CHIRP Comment: This report was raised with the CAA (SRG), who confirmed that a duty is any continuous period during which a crew member is required to carry out any task associated with the business of the aircraft operator. The CAA added that it is not unreasonable for one cabin crew member to collect the crew's allowances provided this can be done within the rostered pre-flight report period.

The report and the CAA's advice were forwarded to the operator concerned.

RUSHED DEPARTURE

Report Text: In an effort to make an on-time departure (after a delayed arriving aircraft) the last pax were hurriedly rushed on board and the door closed almost immediately behind them. These pax could not make it down the aisle with their bags because:

- i) many had oversized/overweight wheelie bags
- ii) due to the boarding process, other pax were still standing in the aisles ahead of them.

Immediately after the door closed, the aircraft pushed back with pax standing in the aisles trying to get to their respective cabins, and others looking for hand-baggage stowages as the overhead compartments were full. More than half of the overhead compartments were still open at the time of pushback between doors 4 and 5.

My colleague was standing in the cabin trying to help the passengers stow bags and I was guarding my doors. We then had the 'Doors to Automatic' call and my colleague found it difficult to get past all the standing pax and their bags to carry out safety duties (ie arm the door). We taxied approx 2/3 mins before the pax were sitting down between doors 4 and 5.

I spent most of the safety demo trying to find approved stowages for bags etc instead of standing at the front as required. I was worried that we might even take off with the cabin unsecured, if I didn't try to secure the cabin properly because of the amount of loose bags and standing pax. I observed crew in their haste stowing bags in unapproved places in order to expedite the process.

CHIRP Comment: From our follow-up enquiries with the reporter it would appear that the In-Charge would not have been aware of the situation; this would also mean that the flight crew would have been unaware.

The reporter emphasised that their workload was high and felt that the priority was to get everyone seated and all bags stowed. However, if they had informed the In-Charge of the problem, the pressure would most probably have been lifted. Good communication is essential in a situation such as that described above; a valuable lesson was learned.

EXCESS CABIN BAGGAGE - STILL A PROBLEM

Report Text: On reading the passenger manifest, it appeared that a passenger had been charged an excess baggage fee, yet still allowed to bring the bag on board. This is a frequent occurrence, with ground staff appearing reluctant to take the bags on most occasions.

I regularly write this on flight reports but no action seems to be taken at all. Last time I mentioned this problem to my immediate manager they told me that "I've been mentioning it for two years now" obviously without success.

This is an issue of safety, not passenger satisfaction, and also affects the health of crew, who are expected to lift these bags when pax aren't able to themselves.

CHIRP Comment: A number of similar reports involving this airline have been submitted, the matter having been raised previously through the company reporting system. The concerns have now been represented at a senior level within the company concerned.

USE OF HEADPHONES ON TAKE-OFF/LANDING

Report Text: New procedure allows pax to wear headphones during take-off and landing providing the device is switched off. How do we know it's switched off? Also, does it impair hearing; say they are sat at a self help exit and we order an evacuation? A lot of crew think it is unsafe.

CHIRP Comment: The company confirmed that their policy not to require passengers to remove headsets is long-established; the company considers that headsets will not impair passengers' hearing as long as the equipment is switched off.

Some other operators include a request to remove headsets in a PA announcement.

UNSECURED INFANT DURING TURBULENCE

Report Text: During the cruise in the early hours the seat belt sign came on as we were experiencing some turbulence. I asked a pax to secure their baby with an extension belt as it was in a bassinet. They refused stating that they would not wake their child. I informed them that it was a safety requirement for the benefit of the baby who was unsecured. Pax still refused and then stood up saying they would stand over their child! I stated that they also had to be seated with their seat belt fastened. After taking their time and collecting a bag from the OH bin they eventually sat down but the infant was still unsecured.

I informed the Senior who told me to wait and see if it got more turbulent! They went on to give the Captain cabin secure knowing that a child was not secured.

The pax had been abrupt and not followed my request and I was unsupported by my senior. I am

concerned that SEP was not followed and the Captain was given false information.

CHIRP Comment: Well done to the reporter for their persistence! The matter was raised with the company who have issued a reminder to crew of company SOPs.

IS IT SAFE?

CHIRP Narrative: From time to time we receive reports from cabin crew members describing an incident in which the aircraft they are operating suffered a technical delay prior to departing an outstation. Reporters have expressed concern that the aircraft is subsequently cleared to depart, on some occasions without any engineering rectification being carried out. On making our follow-up enquiries with the operator, it is often the case that the aircraft has been despatched quite properly in accordance with the aircraft's Minimum Equipment List.

What is a Minimum Equipment List (MEL)?

Modern aircraft have several levels of redundancy in many on-board systems. When an aircraft is designed, the aircraft manufacturer conducts an analysis of each system and determines whether the aircraft can be operated safely for a limited period of time following a failure of a component/part of the relevant system. In cases where the aircraft can continue operating safely for a period of time, the item is listed in the manufacturer's MASTER MINIMUM EQUIPMENT LIST (MMEL). A UK operator of that aircraft type is required to compile a MINIMUM EQUIPMENT LIST (MEL), which is based on the manufacturer's MMEL but also considers the particular operation. The operator's MEL is published and a copy is carried on board each aircraft.

How is an MEL Used?

In the event that an aircraft suffers a technical defect, the MEL lists those items for which a flight or series of flights may be completed prior to rectifying the defect. In some cases, but not all, the aircraft may be permitted to continue to operate to a base where maintenance can be undertaken. In other cases the aircraft may be permitted to operate for a specific period of time and/or number of sectors. The operator's MEL also details whether any maintenance action must be carried out before the aircraft can be despatched in accordance with the MEL. For example, prior to despatch it might be necessary for an engineer to pull and secure a circuit breaker. In other cases maintenance action might not be required.

Who Decides That The Aircraft May be Despatched?

As with other safety matters, the aircraft commander determines whether the aircraft may be operated safely. In reaching this determination the aircraft commander might elect to consult with senior maintenance personnel.
