

CABIN CREW FEEDBACK

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EDITORIAL

COMMERCIAL PRESSURE

CHIRP has received a number of reports from cabin crew members relating to commercial pressure. The reports range from pressure to achieve sales of onboard goods to crew members being admonished for delays caused by circumstances outside of their control.

There have been examples of somewhat paradoxical sales promotions such as offering a bonus incentive for the sale of premium strength lager (clearly intended for passenger consumption during the flight). However, the same crew members are responsible for ensuring that passengers do not consume excessive quantities of alcohol.

Another example relates to on board commission targets. If the route target is not achieved, no commission is paid to the cabin crew. The result is that in order to achieve the target, crew may work throughout some flights without a meal break or continue sales services beyond the point at which the cabin would otherwise be secured for landing.

The role of cabin crew has always been a dual function - that of passenger safety and customer service. The two are not mutually exclusive but there needs to be a careful balance. Customer service must not impinge on safety and security responsibilities - the cabin crew safety function is a legal requirement and must be the priority.

REPORTS

PRE-FLIGHT BRIEFINGS

(1) UNABLE TO ANSWER MEDICAL & SEP QUESTIONS

Report Text: Recent pre-flight briefing, crew consisted of the In Charge and four other crew one of whom had less than six months experience.

Each crew member was asked an SEP question and a medical question. The 'new' crewmember could NOT answer one of their questions, yet was still allowed to operate on the flight. The response to their medical question (with a mocking attitude) was "Sorry, no I can't answer that". The In Charge didn't ask another question, ignoring the fact the previous question was not answered and allowed him/her to fly.

Once on board the new crewmember proceeded to ask the In Charge where the emergency equipment was stowed.

There have been several incidents across the company, where new crewmembers have not answered the pre-flight briefing questions correctly and yet have still been allowed to operate.

CHIRP Comment: The report was passed to the operator, who expressed surprise that the crewmember concerned was permitted to operate as the SEP Manual contains clear procedures to be followed in the event that safety questions are not answered correctly. **CHIRP** was also advised that performance assessments are in place for new crew to track any concerns with their safety knowledge and that the Training Department has been made aware of the reporter's concerns.

There could have been pressure on the In Charge to permit the member of crew to operate, even if they had been unable to answer pre-flight questions, if the flight was operating with minimum crew. In such circumstances it may be appropriate to use alternative methods of assessing safety knowledge - for example by conducting a discreet one-to-one briefing with a crew member who is having difficulties, as could have been the case with this situation.

Despite any commercial pressure (e.g. when operating with minimum crew) the In Charge should be satisfied that all crew members are competent to carry out their safety duties. Equally, cabin crew are individually responsible to ensure that they are totally familiar with

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A Cabin Crew Safety Newsletter

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

all aspects of their SOPs and emergency procedures. If in doubt - ask and discuss!

(2) JOINT BRIEFINGS

Report Text: My company encourages both flight crew and cabin crew to hold our briefings together, which I feel is a good idea as it also helps to create good CRM. However, as far as cabin crew are concerned, the flight crew input should primarily consist of information about weather/conditions en-route, flight time, specific route information etc... and then during the In Charge's SEP part of the brief the pilots can then indicate the things they would be doing in the flight deck during a particular scenario (decompression: O2 mask, descend aircraft, communicate with ATC, PA post descent, communicate with crew, divert a/c etc).

However, some of the Captains have started to take over the briefing from the In Charge, by deciding the topic and what questions will be asked. Some of the pilots appear to be undermining the basic training given to cabin crew on their SEP courses. One such example given was during a briefing about decompression the Captain concerned allegedly disagreed with the answer provided by the cabin crew (the decompression drill-trained answer) and told them not to bother doing what was trained and gave alternative suggestions!

A number of colleagues are concerned that new and/or inexperienced crew could leave a briefing under the impression that the comments received and the conflicting SEP "advice" by some of the Captains, rather than the training they have received, are the correct procedures.

CHIRP Comment: This matter was raised with the operator who was already aware of cabin crew concerns and was taking appropriate action to stop conflicting advice from flight crew on company SOPs.

Where a joint briefing is encouraged, the Operations Manual should contain clear guidance as to who conducts and participates in the briefing.

There are occasions when flight or cabin crew members consider that company SOPs need to be challenged or changed. This is to be encouraged but should only be taken up directly with managers responsible for safety. At no time should an individual's opinion (no matter what their rank) be confused with or take priority over the procedures laid down in the company Operations Manual.

(3) BRIEFING AREA LOCATIONS

Report Text: Due to our recent merger our crewroom has been redesigned. There are fewer tables allocated to cabin crew for the pre-flight safety brief and post-flight duties. We have been told that during peak periods we may have to share tables. Crew members are concerned that due to noise levels (these concerns have also been raised by pilots) and the fact that we work on so many different aircraft types/variants, as well as different flights offering many different services, that safety will be compromised.

I have raised this with the company asking if the CAA find this acceptable, but have received no response. As

an In Charge I must ensure that crew answer individually and not in unison to safety questions/scenarios and I do not believe I will be able to fulfil this if we have to share tables. My question is "do the CAA find it acceptable for us to carry out our legal responsibility for a flight safety brief in these compromised circumstances?" There are no plans for the company to change.

CHIRP Comment: Guidance Material (CAP 768 - Chapter 32) For Operators states that 'for carrying out cabin crew pre-flight briefings, pre-flight briefing areas should afford privacy'.

This report has been forwarded to the CAA for their information.

WEIGHT & BALANCE

Report Text: My company has recently introduced the A### to its fleet. This aircraft is considerably longer than any other aircraft the company has operated. As we do not have any allocated seating there have been a number of company communications asking cabin crew to ensure that passengers are evenly distributed throughout the cabin to mitigate any weight and balance issues. Despite this, and our best efforts to move passengers towards the rear cabin, where few passengers sit; I still have concerns about how safe this practice is. Assuming that passengers are evenly distributed is a risky policy - other carriers can plan in advance and know that X number of passengers are seated in each of the forward, mid and rear cabins. With my company, what may look "even" may well not be, and while I am sure the aircraft is not subject to the same sensitivities as smaller aircraft, surely any assumption that affects safety is a potentially dangerous one?

CHIRP Comment: Without knowledge of the distribution of baggage in the holds and/or the load sheet. it is impossible for cabin crew to ensure that the passenger distribution in a 'free-seating' cabin is appropriate

This report was raised with the operator who, as a result of the **CHIRP** report and company reports raised by their flight crew, have issued a crew notice giving detailed procedures on how to achieve an even distribution of passengers.

DISRUPTIVE PASSENGERS, CREW NOT WARNED

Report Text: During boarding down route, several passengers commented they hoped that outbound trouble-makers didn't cause similar problems on the return. Not knowing what they were talking about a passenger pointed out a couple to me who had apparently been abusive towards the cabin crew and then abusive and violent towards each other. This resulted in them being met by police and escorted off the plane.

Once boarding was complete, the ground agent explained that after the passengers had been taken away by the police the previous week, a report had been submitted to the company and it was expected that the violent passengers would be refused in-bound travel. No response had been received. I relayed this

information to the flight crew and whilst myself and the flight crew weren't very happy, we'd been given no information of the previous incident and as the passengers were not doing anything wrong we took off. Throughout the flight we checked on the passengers and did not serve them any alcohol.

These passengers were a potential safety threat and ensuring the safety of the passengers and crew should be top priority. In future it would be logical for crew to be informed of potential problems, or, if a passenger does behave so appallingly, deny them travel. This is not the first time I have encountered this problem. Only yesterday I did an outbound flight with an abusive passenger and while I reported the incident to the company and checked when they would be returning, I know this information will not be passed on to the next crew.

CHIRP Comment: **When passengers have been disruptive on a flight, it is important that an operator has procedures to ensure that the incident is reported. If the passengers are not barred from returning, the Operator should provide the inbound crew with all the necessary information to enable them to make appropriate decisions regarding their carriage and management.**

It is not known whether the outbound crew had submitted a company report relating to these passengers. Fortunately, on this occasion, thanks to the vigilance of the reporter and their colleagues coupled with information obtained by chance, the passengers posed no problems during the return flight. However, had the crew not been aware of the potential problem the outcome could have been very different.

OPERATING WITH LESS THAN MINIMUM CREW

Report Text: We operated to AAA (Caribbean) with 9 cabin crew. One crew member was taken ill and another crew member was positioned to BBB leaving us with just seven crew. We had a pax load of in excess of 350. All the cabin crew were under the impression we would then have to off-load 50 pax as the manual stated that minimum crew on this aircraft was eight, in exceptional circumstances this could be reduced to seven if operating back to the UK but pax load must be reduced by 50. Operations back in the UK informed us this was incorrect and we were able to operate with 350 pax which we did. As crew we felt pressured and that it compromised safety had an emergency situation occurred.

CHIRP Comment: **The one crew member per 50 passenger rule refers to seats installed and is part of criteria used to establish the minimum number of required cabin crew for an aircraft type.**

However, in unforeseen circumstances, a flight can return home with one below the minimum cabin crew number provided that the number of passengers has been reduced in accordance with a procedure in the Operations Manual, and the CAA are notified post event. The reduction of passengers is not necessarily 50. Notwithstanding the above, the operator should have complied with the appropriate procedures in their

Operations Manual. This incident has been referred to the CAA.

EXITS LEFT UNATTENDED

Report Text: Travelling as a passenger with another operator I have observed on several flights that, while on the ground, pre-departure and taxi, the crew member responsible for the rear doors makes his/her way down the aircraft securing the cabin to the front galley, joining the remaining two cabin crew. This leaves the rear doors unattended; if an evacuation was necessary, who would be responsible for these doors?

As an SEP trainer *[for another operator]*, this gives me grave concerns; this has been observed on all of my ### flights, and must therefore be an issue of procedure.

Having reached the front galley, the crewmember often stays until the "Cabin crew seats for take off" call, all the while leaving doors 2 L/R unguarded.

CHIRP Comment: **It is only permissible for cabin crew to leave doors unattended during taxi in order to undertake safety-related duties. As soon as these duties are completed they should return to their crew station.**

This report was brought to the attention of the operator concerned who advised the following:

"The L2 and R2 are the 2 rear crew members. On the ground either the L2 or R2 would be in the rear galley area prior to the safety demo, when the L2 conducts the safety demo PA from the rear galley.

The L2 then completes the cabin secure check from the rear galley to the middle of the a/c while facing rearwards with a view of the rear galley/door area, while the R2 completes the cabin secure check from row 1 to the middle while facing rearwards. The L2 then returns directly to the rear galley and gives the In Charge 'cabin secure' over the interphone.

Therefore, the only time the rear doors are unattended is on taxiing during the cabin secure check when the pax are all secured, but there is still a visual sighting of the area at all times."

BACK ISSUES

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

Number of Reports Received Since Last Issue: 38

Topics Have Included:

- Pre-flight Briefings
- Pressure to Sell
- Weight Distribution
- Airport Standby
- Management Pressure Re: Delays

CHIRP

CABIN CREW REPORT FORM

CHIRP is totally independent of the Civil Aviation Authority and any Airline

Name: <input type="checkbox"/> Indicates Mandatory Fields Address: <input type="checkbox"/> Post Code <input type="checkbox"/> Tel: <input type="checkbox"/> e-mail: <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Your personal details are required only to enable us to contact you for further details about any part of your report. Please do not submit anonymous reports. 2. On closing, this Report Form will be returned to you. NO RECORD OF YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS WILL BE KEPT 3. CHIRP is a reporting programme for safety-related issues. We regret we are unable to accept reports that relate to industrial relations issues.
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It is CHIRP policy to acknowledge a report on receipt and then to provide a comprehensive closing response, if required. If you do not require a closing response please tick the box:	No. I do not require a response from CHIRP <input type="checkbox"/>
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PLEASE COMPLETE RELEVANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE EVENT/SITUATION

YOURSELF - CREW POSITION	THE FLIGHT/EVENT	CABIN ACTIVITY
CABIN CREW IN-CHARGE <input type="checkbox"/> SENIOR CABIN CREW <input type="checkbox"/> CABIN CREW <input type="checkbox"/> SUPERNUMERARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:	DATE OF INCIDENT TIME LOCAL/GMT AIRCRAFT LOCATION	BOARDING <input type="checkbox"/> INFLIGHT SERVICE <input type="checkbox"/> DISEMBARKING <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
EXPERIENCE/QUALIFICATION	THE AIRCRAFT	FLIGHT PHASE
TOTAL YEARS YEARS WITH CURRENT AIRLINE CURRENT AIRCRAFT TYPES QUALIFIED ON: 1. 2. 3.	TYPE/SERIES NUMBER OF CABIN CREW NUMBER OF PAX ON BOARD	PRE-DEPARTURE <input type="checkbox"/> TAXI <input type="checkbox"/> TAKE-OFF/CLIMB <input type="checkbox"/> DESCENT/LANDING <input type="checkbox"/> STAND/GATE ARRIVAL <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
PASSENGER(S)/INJURY(IES)	NUMBER OF EXITS	TYPE OF OPERATION
PASSENGER(S) INVOLVED? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> INJURY TO PASSENGER <input type="checkbox"/> INJURY TO CREW	WEATHER (IF RELEVANT)	SCHEDULED <input type="checkbox"/> CHARTER <input type="checkbox"/> CORPORATE <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
THE COMPANY	OTHER:	My MAIN POINTS ARE:
NAME OF COMPANY:	REPORT TOPIC / MY REPORT RELATES TO:	A:
		B:
		C:

DESCRIPTION OF EVENT

Your narrative will be reviewed by a member of the **CHIRP** staff who will remove all information such as dates/locations/names that might identify you. Bear in mind the following topics when preparing your narrative:

Chain of events • Communication • Decision Making • Equipment • Situational Awareness • Weather • Task Allocation • Teamwork • Training

continue on a separate piece of paper, if necessary

PLEASE PLACE THE COMPLETED REPORT FORM, WITH ADDITIONAL PAGES IF REQUIRED, IN A SEALED ENVELOPE (no stamp required) AND SEND TO:

CHIRP • FREEPOST (G13439) • Building Y20E • Room G15 • Cody Technology Park • Ively Road • Farnborough • GU14 0BR • UK

Confidential Tel (24 hrs): +44 (0) 1252 395013 or **Freefone** (UK only) 0800 214645 and Confidential Fax: +44 (0) 1252 394290

Report forms are also available on the **CHIRP** website: www.chirp.co.uk