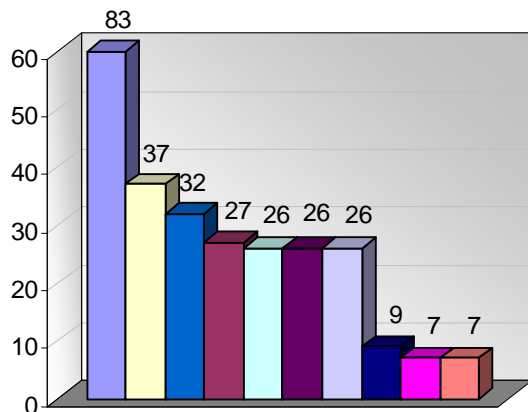


CABIN CREW FEEDBACK

Issue No: 30

Winter 2008

Most Frequent Cabin Crew Issues Received 12 Months Ending November 2008



- Duty**
(Length, Rosters/Rostering, Rest, Discretion, Crewing)
- Procedures**
(Application by Other Parties, Adequacy, Understanding)
- Works Council Referral**
(Health and Safety, T&C/IR)
- Company Policies**
(Operational, Absence, Disciplinary)
- Communications - Internal**
(Crew, Managers)
- Regulation/Law**
(Knowledge of, Compliance with)
- Pressures**
(From Management/Supervision, Commercial, Time)
- Aircraft Technical**
(Systems, Structure, Design)
- Environment**
(Visibility, Wind, Temperature, Lighting)
- Maintenance**
(Installation Error, Servicing Error)

EDITORIAL

CHIRP has received a number of reports relating to cabin crew sickness and the alleged pressure placed on individuals by some crewing departments/operations and/or managers. Other reports have referenced the process by which some operators manage cabin crew absence/sickness.

It is not unreasonable for an operator to monitor and manage absences from work due to sickness; regrettably some individuals are known to use sickness as a method of controlling their roster pattern.

However, crew welfare should be paramount and, in genuine cases, an individual has the right to expect that he/she will receive their company's support. If sickness is mismanaged it could result in an unintended consequence of safety being adversely affected if crewmembers felt compelled to report for duty when knowing that they were unfit to fly.

Company policies for the management of sickness vary, but it is important that, however it is managed, operators have a consistent approach. In some cases HR managers are involved directly in the process but often line managers are responsible for conducting 'wellness'/return to work interviews. The manner in which such meetings are conducted is very important; where necessary operators should consider whether line managers have the appropriate interpersonal skills and/or training to conduct such interviews. A perceived lack of empathy on the part of managers during such an interview can easily give rise to a perception that the meeting is a disciplinary hearing. Such a perception can lead rapidly to a widespread view among other crewmembers that the company is unwilling to accept genuine cases of sickness; this in turn can lead to individuals reporting for duty when knowingly unfit, with all the attendant consequences.

As we have mentioned previously it is a crew member's responsibility not to operate when unfit. It is imperative that cabin crew are able to react effectively, both physically and mentally, should unforeseen circumstances arise. Remember that you are stating formally that you are fit to fly by signing-in/reporting for duty; if you are not fit to fly, you should not be going to work.

If a crewmember, who is genuinely ill, feels that they have not been dealt with in an appropriate way they must first raise the matter at the earliest opportunity with their company, or seek the advice of their union representative.

REPORTS

UNFIT FOR DUTY? (1)

Report Text: My company's policy for cabin crew sickness states that you have to inform the Crewing Department of your unfitness to fly several hours prior to your report time, then on your return to work you have to fill in a form to explain what your illness was and what action you took to remedy the problem i.e. did you see a doctor, did you take medication etc?

A Cabin Crew Safety Newsletter

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

Following on from this you then have a "return to work" chat with a manager. Having done this for several separate periods of unrelated illness within a defined period, I was told that I would be having a disciplinary meeting which could result in a disciplinary outcome. The three separate illnesses related to 1) a sinus infection; 2) a cold and blocked ears; 3) food poisoning.

Cabin Crew are told time and again not to fly when unfit, especially with blocked ears/sinuses etc. Then we are told that a disciplinary will follow if we report sick in a defined period. This seems to me to be somewhat contradictory. I feel the reason for the disciplinary action is to deter people from calling in unfit as it costs the company money. This is very worrying as it encourages inexperienced crew or crew on fixed term contracts to fly when they are unfit. They are doing this out of fear of either being disciplined or not having their contracts extended. I understand that the company needs to be seen to look after the welfare of their staff and that in the current financial climate all unnecessary costs are kept to a minimum. However, to encourage crew to fly when unfit is wrong.

(2)

Report Text: Aircraft had been dispatched from Base with minimum crew; one of the cabin crew had become very unwell and had decided that they were not fit to operate back. He/she had only reported for this flight due to bullying tactics from management who had informed this person he/she would face disciplinary action if they failed to report for a duty due to sickness.

The possibility of off-loading some pax to make the load a rescue flight was discussed with the In Charge and Captain and whilst the In Charge looked up the requirement in the Manual, the Captain had a chat with the crew member who suddenly declared that they were fit to operate home!!!

On the inbound sector it was discovered that the Captain had told the crew member that they would need to be examined by a doctor which scared them into operating home. None of the crew were happy about this as we all felt that you are either fit or unfit to operate a flight and that there was no middle ground. Had this crew member had a turn for the worse or relapsed to their state on the outbound flight anything could have happened. The crew felt it was totally inappropriate for the company and the Captain to put this kind of pressure on someone just to maintain the aircraft's timetable.

CHIRP Comment: In the circumstances described in the second report, as a duty of care, it would not be unreasonable for a Captain or the In Charge, to recommend that a crewmember see a doctor.

USE OF CAPTAIN'S DISCRETION

Report Text: Operated AAA(UK)-BBB(US1) on Day 1. Day 2 reported at 12.30 local to position BBB-CCC (US2) and then CCC-DDD(US3) (both East Coast). We were rostered to arrive at 22.35 local and unfortunately after queuing for an hour at BBB airport we were told that our flight BBB-CCC had been cancelled, so therefore we

would have to go via EEE(US4). We flew BBB-EEE EEE-CCC then we had to catch a coach CCC-DDD.

We eventually arrived at our hotel in DDD at 04.30am on Day 3. Whilst on the coach the Captain had mentioned that we needed approx 14 hours rest, however, he elected to reduce our rest to 12 hours as he didn't want to delay inbound pax and the outbound crew the next day. This is happening more and more often, we are fed up of being bullied into minimum rest, can Captains keep doing this to us?!

CHIRP Comment: When using Discretion the Captain is required to 'take note of the circumstances of other members of the crew'. However, this does not necessarily mean that the Captain will be able to accommodate the wishes of all the crewmembers in reaching his decision. Good practice is, where possible, for the Captain to explain fully the reasons for his decision as was indicated in this report. However, once the decision has been taken by the Captain, and sometimes this will not be a decision that cabin crew will agree with, it is the Captain's decision and not one that can be changed by bargaining!

The decision to enter Discretion or reduce rest is not one that is taken lightly. When Discretion is used to extend a duty period the Captain is required to complete a Discretion Report. If the Discretion used is greater than two hours or a reduction of rest greater than one hour, it is a mandatory requirement for the Captain to submit a written report to the CAA within 14 days of the aircraft's return to base. If an operator has a significant number of Discretion reports the CAA may use these to challenge the realism of particular schedules.

OVER AND ABOVE MIN CREW - SEATING REQUIREMENTS

Report Text: I recently operated a flight from the UK to the Middle East and returned the same day. It is now a company requirement (apparently) to have over and above the minimum crew complement onboard as one needs to be a 'blocker' of the flight deck door. However on the particular aircraft I operated we didn't have sufficient crew seats. My concern is that I had to sit in the passenger cabin for take off and landing - outbound I sat in 1C and inbound I sat in 7C as these were the seats available on that day. I feel that this is an unsafe practice as if we were to have an emergency I wouldn't be able to carry out my duties. We have crew seats for a reason - for crew! Either operate on a larger aircraft i.e. our B###'s which have enough crew seats or keep row 1 A-C and 2 D-F free for crew use only.

CHIRP Comment: All required crewmembers must be seated in a designated crew seat with their harness fastened. However, in general it is perfectly acceptable to have additional crew on board and for them to be seated anywhere in the cabin. It would be unusual for additional crew to be allocated any safety-related tasks as their carriage is over and above the minimum number required for safety, not service, purposes. However, if any non safety-related duties are allocated to additional crewmembers, as in this case, these would be as directed by the In Charge and detailed in the Operations Manual. Ideally, in such circumstances, an

aisle seat would be appropriate, but there is no regulatory requirement for this.

WHY ARE CABIN CREW DUTY PERIODS CALCULATED ON THE FLIGHT CREW REPORT TIME?

Report Text: Why do regulations allow my Flight Time Limitations to be based on the Flight Crew report time when I report thirty minutes earlier for every flight? Especially as I can do one additional hour on duty.

CHIRP Comment: We sought guidance from the CAA's Flight Operations Policy Department, who provided the following explanation:

The extra report time that most operators require is recognised as necessary time for the cabin crew to conduct their full pre-flight planning and associated safety and security checks. Therefore the Flight Duty Period calculation is based on the Flight Crew's report to prevent the cabin crew's FDP being more limiting than the Flight Crew where the cabin crew report in a more limiting time band. Conversely where the Flight Crew report in a more limiting time band it is that FDP limit that the Cabin Crew's FDP is based on. The extra hour was designed to be used to cover the additional pre-flight duties, which could be longer than the reporter's 30 minute requirement.

RESTRICTED USE OF AUXILIARY POWER UNIT (APU)

Report Text: As a company, we are trying to save costs by turning off the APU and the company policy is that the Captain should turn it on if requested to do so by the cabin crew.

On a recent flight when the First Officer switched it on the Captain immediately switched it off. He walked to the rear of the aircraft saying that he was the Captain, and would decide whether we were hot or not! All the crew at rear of the aircraft were very hot, it was 29°C and climbing. Pax were also complaining during boarding but air conditioning was only switched on once all pax had boarded.

It is becoming more common amongst some Captains to refuse to switch the air conditioning on and like this incident do not like to have their authority questioned.

CHIRP Comment: Cost (fuel saving) is not the sole reason for the introduction of this policy. There are also environmental considerations. It may not be widely known by cabin crew that a number of airports both in the UK and overseas, impose restrictions on the use of the APU within certain ambient temperature bands. A breach of these restrictions may result in a fine. This often means that the APU may not be started until, usually, 10 minutes before departure. Additionally, many airports have a '5 minutes policy' requiring the APU to be shutdown within 5 minutes of arriving on stand and not allowing re-start until 5 minutes before departure, irrespective of outside air temperature.

When there is no restriction and the cabin conditions are very uncomfortable, it would be reasonable for the flight crew to respond positively to a cabin crew request for the APU to be switched on.

If APU restrictions had been in place in the report above, it would have been helpful if the cabin crew had been informed of this.

RE-SETTING CIRCUIT BREAKERS

Report Text: On several flights recently (on both the A### and B### fleets) I have experienced the boiler circuit breaker popping in the economy galley. On most occasions the In Charge followed the procedure of calling the flight crew via the interphone and advising them of which circuit breaker and then, with their permission, re-setting the popped circuit breaker.

Whilst I understand that this is the procedure in our cabin safety manual, other companies that I have worked for do not allow circuit breakers to be reset during the flight for non essential equipment. My main concern is that on a few flights I have seen cabin crew (both junior and supervisory) just push the popped circuit breaker for a boiler back-in without informing other cabin crew or even the flight crew. Obviously there is a reason that the circuit breaker has popped, and by pushing it back-in there could be a risk of fire. There are many boilers on all our aircraft and the services can most definitely run without the use of one or two.

I have raised this matter internally but had no response. With so many crew operating on one flight a popped circuit breaker could be pushed back in many times. When I have spoken to crew on the subject I was shocked at just how many crew were unaware of how serious this could be and admit to pushing circuit breakers back-in many times after they have popped.

CHIRP Comment: Whilst some aircraft manufacturers design circuit breakers as 're-sets' there are guidelines and controlled conditions where this is permitted, usually with the permission of the flight crew.

One of the purposes of circuit breakers is to isolate a potential fire risk. The risk in bypassing this protection by re-setting a popped circuit breaker without first seeking the permission of the flight crew is obvious. CAP 768 (which can be downloaded/viewed from the Publications section of the CAA website www.caa.co.uk) states that:

In-flight use of circuit breakers will usually involve the action of resetting a circuit breaker which has tripped because of an electrical overload or fault. The reestablishment of electrical power to a circuit which is at fault involves an element of risk. In flight, cabin crews should not reset CBs associated with domestic services/equipment such as ovens, water boilers etc. because, by definition, the circuits involved are mostly within passenger areas and the inconvenience caused by the loss of service would not justify any possible distress occasioned by 'electrical smells'. Resetting of circuit breakers is only allowed in accordance with the flight manual procedures and when there is no associated condition of smoke or fumes. A second reset should not be attempted.

This report has been forwarded to the operator concerned where a reminder has been issued to all cabin crew.

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 NUMBER OF EXITS	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)	WEATHER (IF RELEVANT)	TYPE OF OPERATION
PASSENGER(S) INVOLVED? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> INJURY TO PASSENGER <input type="checkbox"/> INJURY TO CREW	TURBULENCE <input type="checkbox"/> THUNDERSTORM <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:	SCHEDULED <input type="checkbox"/> CHARTER <input type="checkbox"/> CORPORATE <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
THE COMPANY	REPORT TOPIC / MY REPORT RELATES TO:	MY MAIN POINTS ARE:
NAME OF COMPANY:		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