

CABIN CREW FEEDBACK

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EDITORIAL

CABIN CREW TRIAL - STATUS

Confidential Reporting for Cabin Crew has reached the end of the one-year trial period. It is with pleasure that we can confirm that, following a review of the quality of safety-related reports we have received to date and the positive response from Industry, the Civil Aviation Authority (Safety Regulation Group) has agreed with the Trust's recommendation that the trial be extended to March 2003. Thanks in particular to those of you who have taken the time to forward safety-related reports.

Thanks must also go to all the organisations who are supporting and participating in the Programme by making CABIN CREW FEEDBACK and Report Forms easily accessible to their staff/members.

ANONYMOUS REPORTS

Don't forget that, in almost all circumstances, we are unable to act upon anonymous reports. We require your personal details to permit us to contact you, in confidence, if we are unsure of any aspect of your report, and to discuss how best we might represent your concern. Your details also permit us to advise you of any action that is subsequently taken in response to your report. Our policy is to return all personal details on closing each report.

If you would like clarification of our procedures, please feel free to give us a call.

REPORTS

SHOULD YOU BE HANDLING FOOD?

I recently operated a flight and was concerned about the lack of knowledge concerning health and safety issues.

Some crew members went down with diarrhoea before reporting for duty and then another during the flight complained of stomach pains and diarrhoea. During the

meal service the crew members were giving out meals, I informed them that they should not give out the meals and that they should sit out the service. I went to the back of the aircraft and when I returned to the front the crew members concerned were still giving out meals. I reminded them that they should not touch anything but they had been told to carry on with the meal service by the In Charge (who was aware that they had diarrhoea).

I reiterated to the In Charge that anyone with diarrhoea should not handle food due to the risks involved. This was agreed and the In Charge took over the duties. Later the affected crew members did the tea/coffee service which I think was also wrong.

I believe I was right to stand up for what I know to be correct.

This report was forwarded to the Company concerned for their information. They have confirmed that current crew procedures require that food should not be handled if crew are suffering from skin lesions, or are suffering from sickness and diarrhoea.

It is the individual's responsibility to report fit for duty; only they can assess their own fitness. If unwell, report sick. Cabin crew must be fully fit to carry out their safety duties, otherwise they put themselves, their colleagues and passengers at risk.

THREAT OF REDUNDANCY

The company I work for is currently going through some drastic changes, which include the requirement to reduce its cabin crew work force significantly. They have chosen to do this, in large part, by making people compulsorily redundant. They are using a number of criteria to select crew for redundancy including the number of sick days that have been taken in the recent past. An undesirable and perhaps unintended side effect of this has been to provide a disincentive for crew to report sick when they are unfit to fly.

A recent flight I operated was in the middle of a cold and 'flu epidemic. On the return sector of this flight it came to my attention that at least one of my crew was on antibiotics and that another, who had been feeling

A Cabin Crew Safety Newsletter

from the Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme

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unwell before reporting for the flight, had spent a large part of the day in the toilets vomiting. Both of these crew members had decided not to report sick for fear of being made redundant.

Using properly reported sickness absence as a criterion for redundancy, as reported, should not be any part of Company policy.

Cabin crew duties are primarily concerned with safety. Mobility to carry out such duties effectively due to illness directly impacts safety. As will be seen from the previous comment, cabin crew have a duty to report for duty only if they are fully fit.

DID YOU HEAR THAT?

I was operating a flight and as I approached the galley, I heard a PA announcement summoning a senior crew member to the flight deck. On hearing this PA, I continued to the galley and asked if any of my colleagues had heard the announcement; they agreed they had heard something but were not sure what exactly had been said. I repeated what I had heard and we agreed to secure the galley and go to our report stations and await instructions. We were then informed that there was no emergency and indeed reprimanded for taking up our emergency stations.

I know the actual words of the announcement were not in accordance with our SEP Manual but to ignore any non-standard announcement must be worse than preparing for a potential emergency that does not arise.

Where the operator arranges a specific sentence or message that is intended to alert all crew members on board that something is amiss, the flight crew will have been taught to use these words without variation. So, if an announcement is made that doesn't quite follow the script and a cabin crew member who hears it has doubt as to what the flight crew member meant to say, then the safest course of action is to contact the flight deck using the procedures specified by the operator to ascertain whether or not there is a problem. It would seem inappropriate for a reprimand to have been issued in response to the action taken.

SATURATED ON LANDING

I was operating as Cabin Crew on Door##. As we boarded the aircraft the inbound crew warned us of an incident that had occurred on the inbound flight, namely that a large amount of water had poured out from underneath the bev. makers in the rear galley and saturated the crew member at this door position. They asked who was to be in this seat, which was myself, to pre-warn me.

When we boarded, a note to this effect was also taped to the crew seat at this door position warning the next occupant to sit elsewhere. I took the note to the front of the aircraft and asked the senior crew member to pass it on to the In Charge - I asked if it would be possible, if we weren't full, to block out a rear aisle seat for myself and the crew member to revert to coverage of Door##. The dispatcher confirmed that the aircraft was not full. The In Charge then came to the rear and suggested that we plunge out the sink and that I wear a raincoat!! The Senior informed me prior to take off that the In Charge had said that I must remain in my allocated seat as this was my door responsibility. I rang to confirm this and was told by the In Charge to put a blanket over my head!! Prior to the safety demo I asked if they were really serious. It was also suggested I take a bin bag out of the bin. I said I felt this was wholly inappropriate. I willingly sat at my assigned position for take-off as I knew that due to the angle of the aircraft that an incident was only likely to occur on landing.

During the flight the In Charge asked if anything had occurred on take-off and I said no but reiterated my reluctance to sit there for landing. They said they could not authorise me to sit elsewhere. On touchdown I was saturated with dirty tepid water. If I'd had to operate another sector I would have found it extremely uncomfortable, also if the water had been hot I could have been seriously injured. The galley floor was covered in water and the carpet near the toilets saturated (as it had been when we boarded). This may have impeded an evacuation. After landing, when I was disembarking the Captain said, "Well at least it was only tea". I found the lack of importance given to the foresight of such a potential hazard quite unacceptable.

This report highlights the potential hazard of a wet floor in the event of an evacuation.

Defects with potential to cause a hazard such as this should be rectified before departing on an outbound sector. Crewmembers need to be aware of their own Company procedure for reporting such defects. A significant release of liquid/fluid in the cabin should always be added to the Tech Log since contact with underfloor electrical systems may cause problems.

ARE YOU TIRED YET?

We were rostered for a duty of Europe > Mediterranean > East Africa > UK1 then by car in a taxi to UK2.

Reported for duty at 2145Z after night-stopping. We met the aircraft from UK2, boarded pax and left early for Mediterranean at 2255Z.

We landed at the Mediterranean stop at 0300Z to refuel and left at 0415Z for East Africa.

We landed in East Africa approx 0830Z, where all the pax disembarked. We then departed at approx 1000Z and positioned back to UK1 and landed at 1645Z. We then got in a taxi and arrived at UK2 when our duty period ended at 1930Z.

This flight was legal under CAP 371, because we positioned back on a 7.30 sector, and then a further 2.30 hours back to UK2!

I would like to point out that all crew were well rested for this duty, but we all found that on our return to UK2 we were all very fatigued and still had to drive home, we were not functioning in a safe manner.

Positioning after a flight is not included within the Flight Duty Period but a cabin crew member is entitled, in accordance with CAP 371, to a Rest Period that is at least as long as the Duty Period (less one hour) before reporting for a Flight Duty. Some operators make specific provision for crews on completion of an extended Duty Period.

FUEL FUMES - NOT A SAFE OPTION

The following report has been submitted by an Airline Safety Department representative:

Having read with interest the fuel fumes report in the last issue of *(the Air Transport) FEEDBACK*, it is timely to highlight a recent similar event that we experienced. Having looked at various safety databases it would appear that this type of event has occurred several times before with differing degrees of action taken by those concerned.

In our case the aircraft had gone u/s several hours prior to departure. Due to a breakdown in communication the flight crew were not informed that the aircraft was u/s and had managed to get onboard. As this was the first flight of the day, the APU had been started, and the air conditioning selected on. What no one knew was that the APU had developed an external fuel leak. The fuel leak was adjacent to the APU inlet and as a consequence fuel was sucked in and passed through the air-conditioning system. At approximately the same time the APU was started the flight crew boarded minus the Captain and the Senior Cabin Crew Manager. Once onboard the crew immediately noticed noxious fumes.

The Captain boarded approximately 10 minutes later followed closely by the Station Maintenance Manager (SMM). At this stage the cabin crew onboard had been exposed to the fumes for 10 minutes. The SMM then conducted an inspection outside to try and ascertain the source of the fumes. A ground support vehicle had been noticed parked at the back of the aircraft with its engine left running, so there was a suspicion this may have been the cause of the problem. When the SMM returned

inside the conditions had deteriorated to such an extent there was mist coming out of the overhead vents. On the advice from the SMM the APU was shutdown and the crew evacuated from the aircraft. The cabin crew had been exposed to the fumes onboard for in excess of 20 minutes! The crew were subsequently taken to the airport medical centre for treatment.

With any serious incident there are many contributing factors. In this case the crew were not told that the aircraft was u/s, and were allowed to get on the aircraft. The crew also boarded without the Captain and the SCCM being present. This removed the leadership element. What was worrying, was the fact that although they recognised the fumes were noxious they did not take it upon themselves collectively or individually to remove themselves from the aircraft. In this case I believe the crew knew there was a problem but were waiting for someone of higher authority to make the decision to evacuate. Initial boarding of the aircraft should always include the Captain and SCCM. If this is done then the tech and cabin logs can be checked, an assessment of the work environment done and the applicable brief to the crew carried out. Only then should senior crew members go about other business that they may have away from the aircraft.

It is timely that we remind ourselves of the health and safety hazards that may exist on the aircraft. It is also timely that we remind ourselves that we are individually responsible for our own health and welfare in situations that we know are hazardous.

Fumes in the main cabin may not be readily apparent on the flight deck. It is important that cabin crew are trained to notify any member of the flight deck crew to enable an early decision to be made on whether to leave the aircraft or not. If in doubt, use your initiative.

GLASS FRAGMENTS

Quite regularly (about once per week) a glass is dropped accidentally on the carpet and breaks. On each occasion, there has not been a dust pan and brush available to clear-up. In the circumstances we clear up all the big pieces but it is impossible to avoid leaving a few potentially harmful fragments on the carpet. This could cause injury to a passenger, e.g. if they were not wearing their shoes. If a dustpan and brush were provided on all aircraft then the fragments could be cleared up more effectively and safely (eliminating the need for crew to pick-up fragments by hand). Surely this could be provided at minimal expense?!

This report was brought to the attention of the Company; dustpan and brushes will be provided on all aircraft where glasses are provided.
