CHIRP Cabin Crew FEEDBACK

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REPORTING THEMES FOR 2015

Reporting themes normally change year on year at CHIRP, but throughout 2015 the reports received were consistent with previous years. Similar to 2014, we received just over 250 cabin crew reports. A high number of these reports were disidentified and sent, with the individual reporter's consent, to the operator or the CAA – in some cases both, for comment and/or investigation. All responses were then fed back to the reporter before the report was closed. Reports are also disidentified and passed to the Cabin Crew Advisory Board for discussion at their quarterly meetings with selections of reports then published in Cabin Crew FEEDBACK.

As we remind reporters in our responses, CHIRP works independently of operators and the CAA. We provide a third party reporting programme for reporters who feel that they cannot voice their individual concerns through their company reporting system or would like us to take their concerns further. When CHIRP discusses concerns with operators or the CAA, no personal information is passed on and the report is disidentified of any details that may infer the identity of the reporter.

CHIRP receives a high number of reports that discuss fatigue concerns, discretion and/or rostering. It is important that these concerns are also highlighted to the company through the operator's reporting system so that the operator can monitor and record them accordingly and be able to conduct effective trend analysis. In doing so, operators collect information which allows them to identify a pattern or a trend. The operator can then compare reports on a particular subject against previous years and investigate why this may have increased or decreased.

Each operator receives high numbers of internal safety reports every month, some of these reports will be from crew who are reporting the same concerns. Unless there is a clear and immediate threat, an operator cannot act on an issue without being able to see a current trend, so it is through these reports continually being submitted over time that an operator can identify a problem and action a change when needed.

We continued to receive a high number of reports throughout 2015 relating to Minimum Equipment List (MEL) queries, defects on aircraft and maintenance issues. When an item is defective, it is important that the fault is recorded following the company guidelines so that it can be rectified accordingly. We have included a report in this issue of FEEDBACK which is an example of the type of report we receive regarding these issues and notes the potential corrective actions that could take place.

USE OF COMMANDER'S DISCRETION AND THE INTRODUCTION OF EASA FTLS

In the last edition of Cabin Crew FEEDBACK, we printed a report regarding the Use of Commander's Discretion. At the time, the response given by CHIRP was correct under CAP 371 but as not all operators had transitioned to European Aviation Safety Agency Flight Time Limitations (EASA FTLs), this answer would only apply to those who had not yet transitioned. As of the 18th February 2016, UK operators with aircraft containing 20 seats or more were required to transition to EASA FTLs.

The EASA FTL combined document (which is available from the CAA website) defines the specific changes to regulation, however it would be best for crew members to refer to their company operations manual to understand the changes made at their company. If still unsure, crew can seek advice from their Union representatives who can explain the changes in more detail.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR

When reports are submitted through CHIRP, it is one person's view of an incident or occurrence. However, there is normally more than one person involved in a safety incident and to be able to understand what happened and determine why it may have occurred, it helps to hear what the other person(s) involved think and also add to the explanation of the event.

Flight crew and cabin crew work as part of a team, but have differing roles. Both 'sides of the team' are busy at different points of the flight and sometimes it can be misunderstood what the other party is dealing with at certain times. Effective teamwork needs communication between the flight crew and cabin crew. If you aren't sure what they are thinking or are unhappy about how something has been handled, talk to each other – you may each have a different perspective on things. If you work together and communicate with each other, it is easier to solve problems.

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PUSHBACK WITH PASSENGERS STILL STANDING

Report Text: This was an almost full flight. Most passengers had 2 pieces of hand luggage and early on during the boarding process it became evident, as is often the case, we would struggle to accommodate all hand luggage. All available cabin crew were proactive in the cabin and assisted passengers to try and find space for their belongings. The ground staff asked to close the door almost immediately after the last passenger had boarded. At this stage there were still at least 20 people standing.

I was stood at the boarding door and approximately 30 seconds after the door closed, my colleague at the rear of the aircraft phoned to say that they had multiple pieces of hand luggage which they couldn't stow and lots of passengers still standing. It was impossible to reach the SCCM as they were stuck in the cabin between passengers trying to stow bags. I proceeded immediately to the flight deck, with the flight deck door still open, and told the Captain the situation in the cabin, clearly stating that we had lots of passengers still standing and we were struggling to stow all hand luggage. They asked us to do our best and keep them posted.

Approximately 90 seconds later I noticed the flight deck door had closed and felt the aircraft pushback. At this stage we still had around 10 passengers standing and 50% of the overhead lockers still open. We eventually managed to stow all bags in wardrobes as there was no alternative. I would estimate everyone was seated and bags stowed approximately 3-4 minutes after pushback commenced.

The SCCM discussed the situation with the Captain after take-off and the obvious safety implications of pushing back with passengers still standing. The Captain claimed not to know that there was still anyone standing even though I physically went into the flight deck and told them just moments before pushback. I felt let down that the Captain had chosen to disregard the information I had told them and push back the aircraft and endanger the passengers and crew still standing.

Lessons Learned - If the cabin crew tell the flight crew that there are passengers still standing, then they should not move the aircraft! I appreciate the pressures of on-time departures, however safety is and should always be our top priority.

***CHIRP* Comment:** This situation is a frequent problem and is not limited to a specific operator; however, it should not be occurring as it is a risk to safety. There is pressure on everyone to achieve on-time departures and unfortunately delays are blamed on different areas of the company without really solving the problem.

As a recent incident illustrated, delays can contribute to other problems occurring. A late push back was one link in a chain of events that resulted in a near collision on the taxiway. There is no suggestion that the delay was the responsibility of the cabin crew but it was an example of how minor events can add up and become major. All that said, the bottom line is that all parties have a responsibility to ensure that the aircraft departs safely which means that pushback does not occur until all baggage is stowed and passengers are seated.

In the absence of the SCCM, the reporter correctly informed the flight crew that the cabin was not ready for pushback. However, even though it was only a few moments later, it seems likely that the flight crew took the closing of the aircraft door to indicate that the aircraft was now ready to push back. To avoid any confusion, the SCCM should be assertive in refusing to allow the aircraft door to be closed until all bags are stowed securely and passengers are seated. If incidents like the above do occur, they should be reported to the company through the normal reporting channels so that they can be monitored for trends and frequency of events.

ELECTRICAL FAILURE

Report Text: During cabin secure, a crew member noticed that rows 1-26 ABC had no seat belt or no smoking lights. The SCCM told the Captain who tried two attempts at resetting it. This failed, during this time we also noticed that the call bells and reading lights were not working, so a total electrical fail on the left hand side of the aircraft. The crew performed PA checks and checked all emergency exit lights of which all were operational.

The Captain then said we would fly back to base where we waited for an engineer for an hour. The Captain checked the MEL and advised that we could depart without them working, so we then had to perform the last 2 sectors with the left side PSU and signs inoperable.

Today, I am flying on this aircraft again and they are still not working. I understand that our hands are tied if the MEL says that it is legal but how can that be legal? We are told so often about the quick response to call bells as there may be a medical situation which we must attend to, why are we told this if we can leave base on multiple sectors with the entire left hand side of the aircraft without power?

Lessons Learned - There aren't many lessons to learn here other than continually expressing my concerns. I am not happy leaving a base without the call bells and illuminated signs working.

***CHIRP* Comment:** All items that are found to be unserviceable before departure, should be reported to the SCCM and the flight crew and recorded in the aircraft tech log or cabin defects log – whichever the company specifies. It may be necessary for an engineer to investigate the problem before the aircraft departs, however the Commander will advise on this. If the MEL specifies that the flight can depart with this fault active in the cabin/tech log, this information should be relayed to all of the operating crew so that they are aware of the fault and any alternate SOPs that may need to be adopted to enable the flight to depart. If the MEL states that an unserviceable item must be

rectified within a specified number of sectors (e.g. 10 sectors), the first sector will be from the time that the fault was entered into the cabin/tech log. It has been reported to CHIRP that some aircraft have had a number of reported faults but that when they have been subject to routine maintenance procedures, the aircraft have then been released back to the flying schedule with faults still remaining in the cabin/tech log. This has been due to the availability of spare aircraft parts and the different timings for faults. If the fault is not logged in the cabin/tech log, the fault will remain unfixed. Each different fault (if there is more than one) needs to be entered separately into the cabin/tech log and will have a specific reference.

Sometimes, there are pre-existing faults in the cabin/tech log on arrival at the aircraft as these are still awaiting rectification – if there are, these should be notified to the crew on boarding the aircraft.

The alternate procedure for defective lights on the aircraft will be detailed in the company Ops Manual and aircraft specific MEL and should be followed as instructed.

This is not an ideal situation but if the MEL states that it is an allowable defect for departure then it is legal to depart. There does seem to be some confusion as to why this is an allowable defect when it could be classed as a safety hazard to operate without passenger call bells or seatbelt and no smoking signs. It should be understood that the aircraft would not be able to depart without the alternate procedure in place with the crew. If no such procedure was adopted, it is the operator's responsibility to ensure that the incident is investigated to find out why this did not happen.

MINIMUM EQUIPMENT ONBOARD – IS THIS A SAFETY RISK?

Report Text: On this flight there were 7 operating crew with only 6 crew seats and 6 sets of safety equipment. One crew member sat in the flight deck for take-off and landing. The reason we had 7 crew is that three of us were getting off and night-stopping to come back on a different aircraft the following day.

I submitted an incident form to the company and a few days ago received a notification that it had been closed. I looked at the comments surrounding the investigation and there was a response asking for the report to be reviewed. The answer to this was that the minimum crew for the aircraft was 4 and there were 6 crew seats which meant we carry the above required safety equipment in accordance with legalisation. The extra crew member was there for the service and if there were an emergency or crew were required to don PBEs the extra crew member would be stood down. The extra crew were not needed for the service but for the return flight the next day.

Every operating crew member should have safety equipment for any type of emergency not just a smokehood.

Lessons Learned - There should be a duty of care towards the crew. I have informed my Union representative of this incident.

***CHIRP* Comment:** This report was referred to the operator for comment who advised that sometimes due to service levels onboard, there may be more than the required number of crew for the aircraft rostered to operate the flight. The aircraft in question did however carry more than the minimum required level of safety equipment and during an event, such as a fire/smoke or fumes in the cabin, not all of the operating crew members would be expected to participate in dealing with the event. This would also be similar if a decompression were to occur, supplementary oxygen for passengers and non-required crew is calculated together and there would always be extra masks available throughout the cabin from above the passenger seating. The CAA agreed that the operator in question carried over the minimum required level for safety equipment.

Any crew that are extra to the minimum number required, should be advised by the SCCM at the briefing of what is expected of them during the flight. Operators may have slightly different procedures when it comes to more than the minimum required crew and the safety equipment provided, so it is best to refer to your company manual or if you are still unsure, to discuss with your company safety department.

Contact Us

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