

# CABIN CREW FEEDBACK

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## EDITORIAL

### HAPPY NEW YEAR!

As many of you will be aware, the incorporation of cabin crew into the CHIRP Programme was agreed initially on a one-year trial basis and subsequently extended to 31 March 2003. Following an independent review of the Cabin Crew Programme in September 2002, the CHIRP Trust recommended that this element of the Programme continue and in November 2002 the Civil Aviation Authority (Safety Regulation Group) agreed to fund the Cabin Crew Programme until March 2004.

Please remember that the Programme operates for the benefit of you and your colleagues.

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### BACK ISSUES

Back issues of CABIN CREW FEEDBACK are available on our website: [www.chirp.co.uk](http://www.chirp.co.uk)

## REPORTS

### SEAT HARNESS SIZING

Having been licensed for the (aircraft type) for a few months, after returning to work after a long break I was horrified to find that I was having great difficulty doing up the seat harnesses on either of the Door ## crew seats. The problem is with the two lap straps, which just do not have enough adjustment to fit me properly or comfortably. Having been licensed for 20 or more aircraft types and variants, I've never had any problem with fastening crew seat belts/harnesses. This aircraft is totally different. It has such a small and difficult adjustment within the lap strap part of the harness. I recognise that I'm larger than average within my community but there are many crew like me who have the same difficulty with this aircraft and it's becoming somewhat of a standard joke. I've discussed this problem

with many pilots who have been very supportive. One particular Captain even raised a Safety Report on this harness.

As a result of the comments to management, at least one cabin crewmember has been suspended from operating this aircraft type and has had to suffer the indignity of being singled-out. Our Safety Department have informed us that they are aware of this escalating problem. It would appear that our Engineering Department are not prepared to make any belt modification due to the cost implications. Pax extension belts do not fit this aircraft type harness so this would not help this problem.

My uniform is "off the peg" standard fitting but obviously from the "larger end of the rail".

*Under ANO and JAR-OPS 1 requirements, all cabin crew must be properly secured by the seatbelt/harnesses provided. It is the responsibility of the operator to ensure that cabin crew members are able to comply with the above requirements at their assigned crew station. JAR25.813 requires an assist space adjacent to floor level exits. A cabin crew member should be able to stand in this assist space without impeding passenger egress during an emergency evacuation.*

*This problem had also been reported to the company and investigated by Engineering. The company determined that, as yet, there had been insufficient company reports submitted to justify the cost of pursuing a technical solution with the aircraft manufacturer.*

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### CABIN CREW ROSTERING

The company I work for operates a regional jet aircraft with less than 50 seats. This normally carries two cabin crew regardless of passenger numbers.

Recently there has been roster disruption, increased sickness and resignations. This has led to a shortage of cabin crew. The cabin crew are already working to the maximum, to then place them in a work environment as a single crew increases the stress and fatigue levels. Having looked at the cabin crew manual, it does not

A Cabin Crew Safety Newsletter

from the Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme

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include reference to emergency actions in respect of single cabin crew operations.

*Unless otherwise specified by the Civil Aviation Authority, the minimum certification requirement for an aircraft with less than 50 seats fitted is one cabin crew member. This aircraft is certificated to operate with a single cabin crew member.*

*When applicable to the type, Operations Manual/Company Procedures should address operation with both two cabin crew members and one cabin crew member. The apparent failure to communicate the procedures for a single crew member to both the flight crew and the cabin crew led to them being unaware that this aircraft is certificated for single cabin crew operation.*

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### INFANT COTS/BASSINETS

This is not a report about a specific event but concerns the Company's general procedures. We are told it is acceptable to allow infants to be placed in "infant cots" (bassinets) on the floor in the area around Doors # in-flight. This is the preferred area to seat families with infants.

*Unsecured infants are obviously at risk during unexpected aircraft manoeuvres, such as turbulence. Limitations of the oxygen system should also be considered.*

*CHIRP represented this concern to the company concerned. Following a risk assessment, the Company elected to discontinue this practice.*

*CAA (SRG) commented as follows:*

There is nothing in the rules that says this must not happen. However, it is not best practice and perhaps not a safe procedure. Operators advise passengers to have their seatbelts fastened in flight whilst seated and therefore this should equally apply to infant cots (bassinets) which are normally secured to a bulkhead. It would be interesting to know if these infant cots are being provided by the operator. If this were to be the case then perhaps the operator should not provide more bassinets than can be secured to the bulkhead.

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### FUMES IN THE CABIN

During boarding there was a strong smell of fumes which were not necessarily a fuel smell but of a chemical nature. On enquiring with the flight deck I was told that they "had just put the air conditioning pack on" and that the smell should disappear soon, which it did.

On this particular aircraft there is always a chemical type fume smell at the rear of the aircraft but not at the front. On a double day with four sectors this cannot be beneficial to crew.

*The reporter's actions in this case were correct. Always report any unusual odours, visible fumes etc. in the passenger cabin to the flight deck to permit the matter to be formally recorded, if it is deemed to be sufficiently serious.*

*It should be noted that sources of such smells and visible fumes can originate from outside the aircraft, for example, if the aircraft has been de-iced and some of the fluid has been drawn into the air-conditioning ducts, or exhaust fumes from other aircraft/ground vehicles; these causes are normally transitory.*

*CAA (SRG) has received a number of Mandatory Occurrence Reports on this topic. Two aircraft types are the subject of investigations into a significant number of reports of fumes and smells in the flight deck/cabin; these investigations involve CAA (SRG) and the Manufacturers. In addition, the European Commission has sponsored research into the general question of cabin air quality and the possible effects on crews and passengers.*

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### IS THE DOOR ARMED OR NOT?

I had overall responsibility for L&R # Doors.

We landed into AAA and the request to disarm and cross check doors was carried out. I and my colleague were unable to disarm the Left door. We attempted this procedure a dozen times or more with the passengers having to disembark via a different door. The emergency light had extinguished and the yellow emergency placard had retracted, but the arming lever would not move fully to disarmed position, therefore the disarmed flap was not visible. We got onto our hands and knees and lifted the rubber flap at the bottom of the door to check if the slide was disengaged. It was not, the slide was still engaged as far as we could see. Once all the passengers had disembarked both flight crew attempted to disarm the door and both confirmed they were unable to successfully do so. This was now an inoperative exit. The Captain said that this was a 'grey area' and we would return home as normal. As far as we were concerned an inoperative exit, according to our SEP Manual, states we should reduce our passenger load by 50 and re-seat passengers away from this exit, this exit should not then be referred to during our safety video.

As L# was my exit and I had overall responsibility for both L&R Doors I was not happy with being told to operate home 'as normal'.

I went onto the flight deck before passenger boarding and expressed both my concerns and opinion to our Captain who clearly was not interested and we continued home.

On arrival into BBB (UK) our engineer was unaware of the problem. Once he had boarded the aircraft and removed the bustle from the door to investigate, he confirmed that L# **was inoperative**. On further investigation he found the lanyard from the slideraft was caught in the door frame. Should we have had to use this exit in an emergency the slide would probably not have been able to inflate or be used as the lanyard would have restricted it from opening. Our engineer confirmed also we should have reduced our passenger load and not referred to this exit during the passenger safety briefing.

I appreciate the Captain is in charge of our flight, but this is a very serious safety issue. Why is it in his opinion a 'grey area'? Why train cabin crew on operational procedures when clearly they are ignored?

*A door defect or any other safety-related cabin defect should always be reported to the flight deck crew. Defects that are not sufficiently serious to prevent the aircraft being despatched are listed in the Minimum Equipment List (MEL) together with any specific requirements and/or checks which then must be applied. The decision to despatch in such circumstances rests with the Aircraft Commander.*

*If there is any doubt that a door will be available for use in an emergency evacuation, it must be considered to be inoperative and the relevant MEL restrictions/procedures complied with.*

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## WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Over the last couple of years I have become increasingly concerned about both the attitude and training of some cabin crew with whom I fly. The majority of cabin crew believe that the 'In Charge' is in charge of the aircraft and that the pilots are merely there to get the aircraft from A to B.

One example of this came up in conversation with a cabin crew member recently:

Their opinion was that the 'In Charge' was in charge of everything that went on inside the cabin, the Captain having no jurisdiction. I asked what they would do if the Captain requested them to do something, "Well I'd check with the 'In Charge' to see if it was OK". I pursued this line of questioning enquiring what would happen if the 'In Charge' disagreed with the Captain, they answered that they would do what the 'In Charge' told them!

We could attribute this to many causes, the fact that flight operations and cabin services are completely separate departments within this airline; the fallout from 11th September 2001 with the cessation of the CRM for cabin crew programme and the introduction of the locked door (out of sight - out of mind) policy; the training that the cabin crew receive and others.

The opinion that the 'In Charge' in charge is widely held among the cabin crew community, reinforced during their initial training, where they are told that 'In Charge' is God, and flight crew have little relevance to them.

Another example that would have been amusing if not true was a very experienced senior cabin crew member who finally admitted that the Captain may be in command, followed by the 'In Charge' with the two (long haul) First Officers "just learning"!

The interesting thing is that the majority of crew hold no malice in this opinion, they genuinely believe (through training and perhaps reinforced by both their departmental management and union(s) that this is the case. Any mention of legal responsibility and of the Air Navigation Order is met with total bewilderment.

It has got to the point that I and many of my colleagues fear it is only a matter of time before such attitudes and misunderstandings will risk a minor incident becoming much more.

Perhaps the most startling example was a First Officer transferring the Cabin Defect Log to the aircraft Technical Log at the end of the flight. He came across an entry indicating that 2 BCF's had been used at the rear of the aircraft. On enquiring he discovered that there had been an oven fire but the 'In Charge' decided it was not necessary to inform the flight crew.

*JAR-Ops Sub Part N Flight Crew states: "One pilot amongst the flight crew, qualified as a pilot-in-command and in accordance with JAR Flight Crew Licensing, is designated as the commander ..."*

*JAR Ops Sub Part O Cabin Crew states: "The senior cabin crew member shall have responsibility to the commander for the conduct and co-ordination of normal and emergency procedures ..."*

*The In Charge remains responsible to the Aircraft Commander for the supervision of cabin services and cabin/passenger safety. Company SOPs should detail fire fighting procedures that include alerting the flight deck crew with information on the source, location and severity of the fire and the action being taken by cabin crew to fight the fire.*

*Most company SOPs require that any incident in the cabin is to be communicated to the flight deck as soon as practical.*