

CABIN CREW FEEDBACK

No: 7

April 2003

REPORTS

EVAC ALARM /LIGHT SWITCH CONFUSION

I wanted to turn the cabin lights down whilst at the rear of the aircraft. It is very difficult to see the panel and I almost pressed the evacuation button instead of the light switch.

The evacuation command button should be guarded to avoid accidental actuation.

CHIRP contacted the Company to represent the reporter's concern. The Company were already aware of the problem with this touch-sensitive panel and are investigating means of preventing inadvertent operation of the evacuation button.

PASSENGER BOARDING - A SUGGESTION

Boarding system = passengers arrive at aircraft door en masse and attempt to board as quickly as possible (some do not like being asked to produce their boarding card). Flight number and date now need to be checked on boarding cards.

Minimum crew usually allocated to each flight, boarding crew need to concentrate on ensuring all boarding is bona fide. Distractions often a problem, jeopardising concentration levels e.g. top-up catering arrives during boarding process.

Suggestions:

1. Trickle boarding would greatly assist crew.
2. Provide **correct** catering initially.

PASSENGER SAFETY CARDS AND SEATING

The aircraft that I have been operating has insufficient safety instruction cards. There should be one per passenger. The Company states that one safety card per three passengers is sufficient.

The seat pitch between some rows on this aircraft is apparently below CAA minimum so seat back pockets

have been removed from seats A and C and D and F, thus all cards have to be positioned in the middle seat pocket; often they are not there, or maybe only one safety instruction card is there.

The reporter's concerns were raised with the Company and were the subject of a Quality Department audit.

The Company accepted that one safety card should be provided for each passenger.

Three aircraft, in addition to the one noted in this report, were found to have inadequate seat pitch, as required to comply with CAA Airworthiness Notice 64. A subsequent fleet-wide check identified similar problems. A programme to reconfigure the seating in the aircraft type has now been accomplished. During the course of these checks and reconfiguration, some of the seat pockets were found to be stretched and had to be replaced. The seating configuration is reported to be now in compliance with the minimum pitch requirements, seat pockets have been replaced and safety instruction cards provided.

TOILET SERVICEABILITY

On boarding the aircraft for a long-haul return sector to the UK the crew were made aware of an extremely wet carpet stretching for five or so rows at the rear/centre, also at the bulkhead aft of crew rest area and R2 door area.

I informed the flight crew who didn't know where it could have come from, neither did the ground engineers. I asked if we could call engineering at AAA (UK) but the Station Manager in BBB (Far East) said AAA would just refer problem back to BBB.

We had been told prior to boarding that two toilets would be out of service as they couldn't be fixed in BBB. We had a full flight. Two hours into the flight, we had to shut another toilet off, leaving only one serviceable toilet for 40 premium pax.

Before leaving we were also told that there were several problems with reading lights. One pax showed me his entertainment remote control which had shorted and melted the card.

A Cabin Crew Safety Newsletter

from the Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme

CHIRP, FREEPOST (G13439), Building Y20E, Room G15, Cody Technology Park, Ively Road, Farnborough GU14 0BR Free(0ne):(24 hrs) 0800 214645 Fax 01252 394290

You can also e-mail us at confidential@chirp.co.uk - visit our website at www.chirp.co.uk

All crew felt very uncomfortable regarding the wet carpet situation as no-one could work out where it was coming from, it literally surfaced from the flooring.

Also, what is the situation regarding U/S toilets? What ratio of toilets to pax must there be?

During disembarking a Premium Class pax commented that the lack of toilets was a Health & Safety issue and needed to be addressed.

This matter was raised with the Company who provided the following response:

The problem was due to the non-availability of spares to rectify the relevant defects .

One toilet required a new floor pan assembly because the toilet tank floor fittings had corroded; despite a worldwide search the floor pan assembly was not available and culminated in the manufacturer manufacturing a Service Bulletin kit to satisfy our demands. As you will appreciate the lead time on the availability of this kit was substantial to say the least.

The other toilet, although unserviceable for a shorter period, was awaiting a rinse valve. These components again are in very short supply mainly because they have a high failure rate.

The fact that one of the aft toilets also became unserviceable was more than unfortunate; this too was due to a leaking rinse valve, hence the wet carpet.

The Company confirmed that the Minimum Equipment List does not give a minimum requirement for toilets or other passenger amenity items and assessed that five serviceable units for a full passenger complement was an unsatisfactory situation.

It would not appear to be unreasonable for operators to provide some guidance to crews on passenger/toilet ratios.

REDUCTION OF REST

Cabin crew positioned to AAA (flight was two hours late). Arrived at hotel at 2045L, pick-up was scheduled for 0550L so we delayed our pick-up to 0645L to achieve minimum rest. The Captain who had positioned earlier in the day contacted Ops to explain the situation but they insisted our pick-up time had to remain. Our rest was reduced to nine hours. The Captain was very supportive of our situation but said we had to do as Ops advised. Consequently all cabin crew were extremely tired for the following day's duty which involved three sectors.

Operators do not have any discretion to reduce rest below the minimum amount that has been earned by the preceding Duty Period.

CAP 371 permits an aircraft commander, on an exceptional basis, to reduce a Rest Period but only in so far as the room allocated to the crew member must be available for occupation for a minimum of 10 hours. In no circumstances may a commander exercise Discretion to reduce a Rest Period below 10 hours at accommodation.

DIFFERENCES TRAINING

We were taken on board a ### (narrow bodied twin jet) with a view to becoming qualified on this particular aircraft type - it is different in layout and has different equipment from the other aircraft of this type operated by the company on which I am already qualified. After a tour of the aircraft of some 20 minutes, we were told to record differences in our note books regarding the equipment/layout, and pronounced qualified to operate that aircraft.

The question posed is "Are we properly qualified; is this procedure legal?"

On querying this matter with the Cabin Safety Office at CAA (SRG) they offered the following comment:

The aircraft visit training described appears to be over and above the JAR-OPS 1 required training when the only change is the location of equipment. However, the operator must provide information on the location of SEP equipment in the Operations Manual and provide training on any different SEP equipment..

PARDON? YOU'LL HAVE TO SHOUT!

A memo was recently issued by our Safety Department regarding an environmental study on the noise of one of our aircraft types. We were advised, as crew, to spend minimal time in the galley during flights and to "wear ear defenders" when we are in the galley for longer periods of time. Could you imagine our pax faces when we are wearing 'ear-plugs'!!

Is this a wise move?

We brought this report to the attention of the CAA (SRG) Cabin Safety Office; CAA (SRG) was unaware of the instruction to wear ear defenders. Following discussions between the Company and the Authority the Company has withdrawn the instruction to wear ear plugs.

DUTY TIMES

I am submitting this report regarding a very long day which was rostered.

We were rostered to operate four sectors. Our report was 1000hrs - off duty was 2130hrs - this does not take into account travelling to and from the airport, I personally left my house at 0815hrs and returned home at 2245hrs.

We had no decent turnaround times, so time to eat and refresh ourselves was very limited. On arrival into AAA (Europe) (after the third sector) we had no cleaners, so were expected to clean the aircraft, the toilets were in a very unhygienic condition and I found this totally unacceptable. When are companies going to realise that days like these are not acceptable, when will they realise that we are humans - not robots!

All the crew felt that they were not safe to operate the last two sectors. Crew were falling asleep in the jump seats.

Please note flight crew were replaced after the first two sectors.

This report was discussed with CAA (SRG) Flight Operations Policy Department who provided the following comment:

The Flight Duty Period (FDP) quoted in this report is within the maximum allowable FDP of 12 ³/₄ hours as specified in CAP 371. These limits do not, of course, make any allowance for the time taken for journeys to and from home, since individuals live at completely variable distances from their places of work.

Details of your Company's Approved FTL Scheme may be obtained from your Rostering Department. If you need clarification, check with your cabin crew management.

In a multi-short sector operation, such as that described in this report, the availability of an adequate nutrition break should be a management consideration.

Finally, a reminder that it is your responsibility to report for Duty adequately rested.

AIRFRAME VIBRATION

I am anxious about flying with one particular aircraft in my Company's fleet. This aircraft continues to experience airframe vibration and has done so for the last two-three weeks. The vibration appears to start in the rear of the cabin and then through the rest of the aircraft. It occurs in the cruise but could also, possibly, be in climb and/or descent; it is not been apparent during take off or landing.

My colleagues and I are increasingly apprehensive about flying this particular aircraft. Flight crews are aware of the problem and it had been reported in the Tech Log. However, none of the flight crews I have spoken to are aware of any rectification action taken.

The Engineering department had been alerted to this problem. The vibration could be felt through the airframe but did not register to any significant extent on the aircraft instruments. The level of vibration reported was not considered to be a safety issue, however, in view of crew and passenger apprehension, a standard engine vibration survey run was carried out and some balance adjustments made. The vibration was again reported. After consultation with the manufacturer, a more complex survey run was undertaken and further adjustments made. No further vibration reports have been received since.

If entered in the Tech Log, good CRM principles would lead the flight crew to brief cabin crew members before flight to reassure them. Of course, if any unusual aircraft/engine behaviour is detected, cabin crew should always report this to the aircraft commander.

COMMERCIAL PRESSURE

Due to a rushed turnaround at AAA (Med) and a quick boarding to take-off as quickly as possible, the crew member responsible for handing out infant seatbelts didn't get a chance to do so properly.

A family of three adults, a toddler and two infants were the last to board and were handed out two infant seat belts. They had boarding cards for row ## ABC and F.

Prior to closing the aircraft doors the In Charge and Senior completed a total on board and a seatbelt check. The In Charge met the Senior towards the rear of the aircraft and hadn't noticed that two infants were on the laps at ##ABC where there were only four oxygen masks and five people sitting.

One other crew member during their cabin secure check also missed the infants seating arrangement after the safety demonstration. Luckily I got to this row during the final cabin secure check and noticed the situation. One infant was moved to the other side of the aisle to sit on another family member's knee for take-off.

It is the thought of the consequences if this had been missed and we had suffered a decompression that I have written this report. There is so much pressure to get the aircraft ready for on-time departure that mistakes like this are made. We are often told that on-time is late!

The aircraft is classed as taking off on time as soon as it has pushed back - only for it to be stood waiting on stand for an ATC slot. I find this practice very dangerous - an accident waiting to happen.

Notwithstanding the reporter's concerns, it is reassuring to note is that the crew procedures identified the problem in time and corrective action was taken.