CHIRP Cabin Crew FEEDBACK

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The importance of a 'Just Culture'

A 'Just Culture' is key in safety reporting. It is a culture in which individuals are not punished for their actions, omissions or decisions taken by them which are commensurate with their experience and training; but where gross negligence, wilful violations and destructive acts are not tolerated. It is clear that some cabin crew don't seem to have confidence that the culture in their company is just. This has meant that they have not reported safety concerns or events for action and/or further investigation.

It is important for operators to be made aware of safety issues, even those which seem minor, so that they can take the appropriate action to prevent the repetition of such events and ensure a safe operation.

All cabin crew have a responsibility to report safety concerns whenever they occur. For a 'Just Culture' to exist, there needs to be a two-way trust between the reporter and the company.

NON -REPORTING OF SAFETY CONCERNS

When reporting to CHIRP, reporters are asked if they have already reported their concerns to the company. Of the 618 cabin crew safety reports received by CHIRP during 2019, 33% were not reported to the company. Is this due to the safety culture at their airlines?

For UK based cabin crew, there are several different reporting options. The company reporting programme, the Trade Union (if the company has representation and the crew member is a union member), CHIRP and the CAA Whistleblowing policy. The first port of call should always be the company reporting programme, as this allows the company the opportunity to investigate events as required, trend monitor

and analyse reports and also provide feedback to the reporters. If the concern is relating to industrial matters, these could be reported to the Trade Union for comment and possible investigation. Should the reporter feel that they cannot report their concerns to their company or are not content with the action that has taken place, they can then choose to report via CHIRP or the CAA Whistleblowing process. Most companies have an internal escalation process too.

It is worth noting that CHIRP can only accept reports discussing safety related concerns, events or incidents, including errors, individual performance, regulatory issues and unsafe working practices.

Concerns that are reported to CHIRP are fed back de-identified to operators and the CAA at regular intervals and should a matter be reported that needs urgent action, we will confer with the relevant party as soon as possible to ensure that action is taken.

If crew members do not feel they can report safety concerns through the available reporting mechanisms, how many events have occurred which have not been reported and investigated further?

No one is perfect; everyone makes mistakes but what is important is how we learn from these mistakes and giving the company the opportunity to listen to the concerns and put measures in place to reduce risks. By continuing to report issues when they arise and by encouraging colleagues to do the same, we help to reduce risk and enhance safety. We all have a responsibility to keep aviation safe.

The reports included in this edition focus on the importance of querying procedures and decisions at the time the issue arises and the need to continue reporting safety concerns.

Passenger safety during taxi

What happened? The SCCM permitted a passenger suffering with a spinal injury to stand in the rear galley during the taxi and the playing of the safety demo. This decision violates CAA procedure that all passengers must be seated with their seatbelts securely fastened during taxiing.

***CHIRP* Comment:** For unknown reasons the reporter of this event did not report their concerns to the company before contacting CHIRP. Had they discussed their concerns with the SCCM at the time, the SCCM would have had the opportunity to explain the reasoning behind their decision.

Passengers must be seated with their seatbelts securely fastened for taxi, take-off and landing; as stipulated by EU regulation, not by the UK CAA.

Procedures should be followed to ensure the safety of the passengers and crew, to avoid injury should the aircraft come to an abrupt stop during taxi. If a passenger is standing in the cabin during taxi, the flight crew need to be made aware of this.

SCCMs are encouraged to make decisions based on the situations that they are faced with and should therefore assess the risk based on the information available to them at the time. However, as there was no discussion with the SCCM, it is not known if the SCCM queried whether the passenger was fit to travel due to their spinal injury resulting in them being unable to remain seated for long periods of time. The passenger may have explained their injury to the SCCM, who determined that the passenger was fit to travel and felt that it was acceptable to let the passenger remain standing to provide good customer service and to ensure that they were not uncomfortable. Ideally this decision should be

discussed and agreed with the Commander and the cabin crew briefed on the temporary change. There is often the challenge of balancing customer needs with safety requirements, but crew should ensure that they are satisfied that the safety standards are maintained.

If you are unsure why a decision has been made, please query it at the time. If you do not feel able to speak to the SCCM, ask another crew member their opinion or discuss it with the Captain. Crew must work together as a team which includes communicating effectively with each other.

How would you handle a similar situation if you were faced with it? Would you speak with the SCCM and ask why they had chosen to let the passenger remain standing? If you were uncomfortable with the decision, would you have challenged it with them?

Flight safety during turbulence

What happened? Turbulent weather was expected after departure and after some light turbulence the seat belt signs were turned off. However, it wasn't long until they were back on and they remained on for a long time.

The service was completed, except for the serving of tea and coffee due to the seatbelt signs. During the time the seatbelt signs were illuminated there was little or no turbulence. There were no signs in the cabin of storm avoidance, except for one significant climb. The problems that we had in the cabin were plentiful. Specifically:

- One very frightened passenger who was anxious the whole time the seatbelt signs were on, expecting turbulence to occur.
- Many passengers disregarded the seatbelt signs and were getting up because of the lack of turbulence to move about the cabin and use the toilets. Many of these passengers were desperate for the toilet, having been sat in their seats for hours. The above issues created distraction episodes in the cabin and undermined the seatbelt policy. Whilst I understand that it is safer to be cautious, the passengers lost faith in the direction of the flight crew as they were not accurately informing passengers and cabin crew of forward weather conditions.

***CHIRP* Comment:** Again, this event was not reported to the company.

Communicating with the SCCM or the flight crew at the time may have confirmed the reason why the seatbelt sign had remained illuminated for long periods of time.

This would have allowed either an explanatory PA to be made to the passengers, or the signs to be switched off if they had been forgotten. If the flight crew are aware before departure of turbulence that may occur during the flight, they can notify the cabin crew of this during the briefing. That way the cabin crew can be prepared for the signs to remain on for longer periods and plan before the flight departs as to how this can be managed.

If the FSB signs do need to be left on for a long period, passengers should be advised as this will help the crew to manage the situation in the cabin and possibly allow for a certain number of passengers to use the toilets at any one time, after checking that this is acceptable with the Captain.

Performing service duties during critical phases of flight

What happened? High passenger loads on short flights. The service is still usually being cleared during final approach and gear down. Reported this several times to the company without any response.

Having high passenger loads and being required to complete so many service tasks means that I'm usually sitting down after the landing gear has been lowered.

CHIRP Comment: The cabin crew member has previously reported this concern to their company but has not received a response. As we mentioned in the editorial, not receiving a response to a report could lead a reporter to choose not to report safety concerns in the future. There should be a positive reporting culture present and crew should be able to feed this kind of concern back to the company.

Operators manage safety in different ways depending on the incident reported; some reports are investigated and some may be reviewed or trend monitored. An individual response is not always given, but that does not mean that the concern has not been reviewed or that the company is not listening.

Some operators use social forums to discuss topics with their crew and these forums can be used by the crew to highlight issues that are occurring. However, the main reporting point must always be through the company reporting programme as it is only through safety reporting that a company will be able to accurately identify and track any issues.

If crew are under pressure to complete multiple tasks during a short flight time, this must be fed back so that the company can review the service. Crew should make decisions on the day to ensure that safety is prioritised, which may mean that the full service cannot be completed. The company must be informed of the change in service and the reasons for doing so.

Time management is key during shorter flights; good communication between all crew throughout the flight will assist with managing the workload.

CHIRP analyses the reports we receive and provides regular updates to the operators concerned. In this case, we have notified the company of the reported concerns relating to specific routes.

Safety is paramount, so service tasks must not be completed when the aircraft is preparing to land.

Post-flight security checks not being completed as required

What happened? I am concerned with the lack of end of flight security checks being properly completed and I think that this is something that needs highlighting in training and perhaps as a communication from the company.

In the pre-departure briefing, the pre take-off security checks are always mentioned but never the end of flight ones. I always highlight in briefings that we should be completing these checks and I will go and help others if needed. I find most often that crew are not completing these checks and that I have checked the cabin whilst other crew are sorting their bags, are on their phones or have left the aircraft. I don't think crew realise the potential consequences and that them not spotting an item could be a security risk.

I have voiced my concerns to the company but I do not find the response I received to be satisfactory. They have advised that there is no requirement for a security check; the only requirement is for pre-flight protection of the aircraft. Post flight would be a lost property check in order to find anything left behind by passengers.

***CHIRP* Comment:** In this case, the cabin crew member has reported their concerns to the company but they were still concerned that there could be a security risk due to the checks not being properly completed by their colleagues, so have subsequently reported their concerns to CHIRP.

The reporter's concerns have been discussed with the company and it has been confirmed that security checks are only required to be completed pre-flight. There is however a company requirement for a lost property check to be completed post-flight. A pre-flight security check is completed to ensure that nothing has been left onboard that could cause harm to passengers, crew or the aircraft. Ground security control measures are in place at each airport to ensure that prohibited items are not brought through security and onto an aircraft.

Search requirements vary from route to route and operators may choose to conduct procedures which are more restrictive than the security regulation. In this case both security and lost property checks are required to be completed and should both be performed to the specified standard as stated in the company Operations Manual. It is important that crew familiarise themselves with which check is required and when.

If it is found that either security or lost property checks are not being completed to the required standard, this should be discussed with the crew member at the time and a safety report should also be submitted to the company highlighting this occurrence. The company will then be able to analyse whether there is an ongoing issue.

Inoperative evacuation alarms: is it okay to depart with them not working?

What happened? Upon boarding, I tested the Evac alarm. It sounded in the flight deck only, so I immediately informed the Captain who initiated a system reset. The dispatcher arrived and boarding was delayed whilst this was completed. I tested the alarm again but the same thing happened. The Captain called for an engineer who arrived and again initiated a full system reset.

The Captain came out of the flight deck and informed me it was OK to go with no Evac alarm working on this aircraft type. They asked me if I was okay with that, I said I wasn't but they were the Commander. They said if I had to evacuate, I should inform the crew over the PA. I informed the crew at the rear of the aircraft and they were also not happy with this decision. Two of the crew said that this had this happened before and it's a 'no-go' on this aircraft.

We were now past our departure time. Whilst the engineer was resetting the system the Captain gave the go ahead for boarding and pax started to embark the aircraft. The engineer then asked me to test the Evac alarm with pax on board. They told me to make a PA, I wasn't happy completing this with pax onboard and it made me feel very uncomfortable and unprofessional to be honest. Again, the alarm did not work so the engineer stuck an INOP sticker over the command button and left.

Once the pax were boarded, we had a wait of 25 min with the pax onboard and the Captain closed the flight deck door which we felt was bad CRM and should remain open.

Lessons Learned:

1.There is no clarification in our training as to what we say to initiate an evacuation without the alarm over the PA without the Commander

2. The alarm is used to alert crew of unauthorised access to the flight deck

3. Is it a no go or not?

4. Flight deck door should remain open until push back

***CHIRP* Comment:** The reporter indicated to CHIRP that they had not reported their concerns to the company but did not include why they had not done this. In this case, doing so would have provided the company an opportunity to answer the questions posed by the reporter relating to whether the aircraft was permitted to depart with an inoperative evacuation alarm.

The company has confirmed that in accordance with the restrictions in the aircraft MEL (Minimum Equipment List), the aircraft is permitted to depart with the evacuation alarm unserviceable.

The procedures regarding pre-flight evacuation alarm checks are operator specific. The MEL and company Operations Manual detail the procedures for emergency situations, which all cabin crew are trained in. If unsure of the correct procedure, crew must always consult their Operations Manual or ask an appropriate person in their company. If an alternative procedure is not specified in the Operations Manual or MEL, the Captain and SCCM should agree on what action should be taken in case an evacuation be required and the SCCM should communicate this alternative procedure to the rest of the cabin crew before pushback.

The flight deck door being closed should not inhibit the cabin crew's ability to communicate with the flight crew. If you have questions regarding procedures or decisions that have been made, please speak with the flight crew. Concerns should be raised and discussed prior to departure where possible so that they can be clarified.

The reporter's understanding that the evacuation alarm is solely used to alert crew to unauthorised access to the flight deck is incorrect; the operator has other procedures in place for this eventuality.

The company has confirmed that the testing of the evacuation alarm is performed by an engineer where time permits and when passengers are not onboard the aircraft.

In the situation detailed and where the engineer had already completed several tests to determine whether the evacuation alarm was operable before departure, it is deemed suitable for them to have tested the alarm with passengers onboard the aircraft, so long as an explanatory PA was made to the passengers so that they were aware it was a test.

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