

CABIN CREW FEEDBACK

No: 8

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EDITORIAL

WHO'S IN CHARGE? ...

Following the publication of a report on this topic in CCFB 6, we received a number of reports from both flight and cabin crews regarding who is in charge on board the aircraft. A further report is published on Page 3.

As stated in JAR-OPS and the Air Navigation Order, the aircraft commander is in overall charge of an aircraft. All cabin crew report to the senior cabin crew member who in turn reports to the commander. Any incident, which may adversely affect the safe operation of an aircraft, that occurs on board must be reported to the commander via the senior cabin crew member no matter how insignificant it might seem.

"doors to manual" call from the flight crew - fortunately this was noticed by the fourth cabin crew member and the flight crew alerted.

At one of the UK bases this aircraft is always operated with four crew. Operating with three cabin crew is a commercial decision.

I would not have felt so confident had this incident involved only three crew.

The minimum number of crew required on board an aircraft for safety purposes is specified in the Operations Manual for the aircraft type; in the case of the type in this report the minimum number is three.

An operator may elect to provide more crew than the minimum required; this is usually to provide additional cabin service. Company procedures for cabin preparation and emergency evacuation are based on the minimum cabin crew complement.

REPORTS

CREW COMPLEMENT - SAFETY OR SERVICE?

Having experienced an emergency landing on a ### (regional jet) with four cabin crew due to pax load, I wish to express my concerns about an incident like this being undertaken by only three cabin crew.

Many services from AAA (UK) are only with three cabin crew - with up to 110 pax on board and other routes depending on loads.

The fourth crew member is able to support the In Charge and in this instance had a lot to take on board from receipt of the emergency briefing.

As we had 30 minutes to prepare for the emergency landing into BBB the In Charge was able to leave the front of the aircraft and speak face-to-face to the rear cabin crew reassuring, directing and guiding them, leaving the fourth crew member at Door 1 Left.

We had a first rate crew and were able to pool our thoughts and support each other. It is also a doors 'cross checked' back up - in our incident we did not receive

TURBULENCE, IT AFFECTS THE WHOLE AIRCRAFT

The aircraft was mid-Atlantic. The seat belt signs were illuminated as we were encountering severe turbulence and the Captain had informed the cabin crew to sit down and strap in. We had been strapped in for approximately 30 minutes. I was at Door # # and a fellow crew member was strapped in opposite me. We were having problems with passengers getting up to use the toilets and had to repeatedly ask them to remain in their seats for their own safety.

I then noticed a cabin crew member, who was working at the front of the aircraft pushing a double meal cart down the aisle. When they reached my door location I commented to them that I thought it was inappropriate and also extremely dangerous to bring the meal cart down while we were strapped in, as per the Captain's orders. I was informed that the cabin crew were up and about in the front galley, as the turbulence there wasn't too bad and they were unaware we were still strapped in at the rear of the aircraft. Surely until instructed by the Captain nobody should get out of their seat. The said crew member thought I was making a fuss over nothing,

A Cabin Crew Safety Newsletter

from the Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme

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but if they had read the Company Procedures they would have known that we must abide by Captain's orders. A simple intercom call from the crew member would have made them aware of the situation in our cabin, as the severity of turbulence can be different in different parts of the aircraft.

Cabin crew should never take it upon themselves to ignore an instruction from the commander during turbulence, as the flight crew might have in their possession information/knowledge of weather conditions which cabin crew will probably not know about. Furthermore, if an individual cabin crew member has any concerns then they should contact the flight deck to clarify the situation. Turbulence should never be treated lightly as it can result in serious injuries being sustained.

INTERRUPTED REST

We had checked out of our hotel as normal and got to aircraft and boarded. As we taxied out to the runway, the Captain made a PA to inform of a technical problem so we went back to stand. As a junior crew member I sat at my door as I knew I had to do and waited, the Captain made PA's to inform that engineers were on board. The problem affected the air conditioning which was switched off and the cabin temp was rising. It eventually got too hot and it was decided to disembark the passengers. We were then informed that the flight could not depart as all crew would be out of hours. We were taken to a local hotel for minimum rest, which I believe is 12 hours.

We arrived at the hotel at 11.30pm local and were asked/told to meet in a room to be briefed on what would then happen. We were told we would get a wake-up call at 10.30am the next day (already one hour off our rest time). We were also going into 'our time' at this meeting but we had to attend or we would not know our wake-up and departure time. We had been asked as a group if the pick-up time was OK and it was agreed, but as a junior crew I felt I had no choice but to go along with what was said, as everyone wanted to leave and get back to base (back home) asap. I also felt that if it was a legal issue, as to being within legal working hours, it was up to the airline to make sure we had the rest and not be left up to individual crew to decide, we should be told.

During the night I then received four wake-up calls at intervals starting at 4.30am with the last, my actual wake-up call at 10am (despite agreeing the previous evening it would be at 10.30am). I went down to reception after a badly interrupted sleep to discover everyone else had also had the disturbance of calls throughout the night too.

There was more confusion as our ride to the airport arrived late so we had to wait around, we got to the

airport and then operated the flight home which was approximately 11hrs 15mins and had 2 hrs 30mins crew rest.

I believe, that due to the disturbed rest we had and the fact that it was less than minimum rest, that in operating the flight we were doing so illegally.

It should be the airline's responsibility to make sure that crew operating flights are rested properly following a big delay, it should not be left up to crew to decide as obviously we will all opt to return home, as soon as possible, even operating illegally.

It worries me that, had there been an emergency we may not have been able to handle the situation properly as we were all so tired.

In the absence of the aircraft commander exercising Discretion, the minimum Rest Period in the situation described would have been 11 hours. However, even if Discretion had been exercised an absolute minimum of 10 hours must be available at accommodation, as detailed in CAP 371 Para 19.1.

If a Rest Period is interrupted by telephone calls, raise it at the time with the desk clerk/telephone operator and remind them what time your call is actually booked for. If this does not resolve the problem, report the matter to the Captain and request that it is entered in the Voyage Report for follow-up action by your Company.

The aircraft commander appeared to have acted correctly. Please remember that it is the responsibility of every individual to report fit for duty. If you feel unfit and unable to perform your duties to the best of your ability in a safe manner you should not do so.

CAN YOU DO THE LOTUS POSITION?

On some of our aircraft (narrow bodied), the cabin crew jump seat at Door## is positioned so that the cabin crew cannot sit correctly, thus not allowing them to adopt, properly, the take-off/landing position. This is due to opposite passengers seated so close to the door and crew jump seat. Being over 5ft 10ins, I cannot properly get my legs facing aft of the cabin (unless of course I start yoga classes!), I have to sit to one side of the crew seat on majority of the aircraft of this type. Is this normal practice on other airlines?

The Company has reviewed this matter and recommends that crew members who are not able to adopt the take off and landing position in the crew jumpseat should ask their In Charge to allocate them a different crew seat.

Unfortunately, this type of problem exists in a number of older aircraft types. For newer types recommended

minimum clearances have been agreed as guidance for manufacturers, which, if complied with, should avoid similar problems to that reported.

of equipment or emergency systems that might affect the safety of the aircraft.

IN CHARGE BUT OF WHAT? ...

TEXT MESSAGES FROM CREWING

Re: CABIN CREW FEEDBACK No 6 - "In Charge But of What?"

I am employed by ###, since they took over my previous company. There are irregularities that I consider that shouldn't be allowed to happen.

When cabin crew join my company, and many others, they receive a very intensive course. This contains safety and product information and due to time constraints, little space for what some might consider "extra" information.

One example is sending text messages on your day off, asking to call them. Another example was that they contacted a flat-mate who also works for the company asking them to contact me to give a change for the next day because my mobile was switched off.

Recognising that what the reporter was describing in CABIN CREW FEEDBACK 6 was happening within my company, and when a request for suggested topics to be discussed at the forthcoming joint, flight deck and cabin crew winter refresher courses, it was suggested a module concerning the Commander's responsibility with regard to cabin crew as per our Operations Manual. This would have only been issued to permanent cabin crew but could have easily been included within the "re-joiners" course. Needless to say it did not appear so the situation continued where nearly all cabin crew had no knowledge of the Commander's responsibilities with regard to their own position.

The availability and use of personal mobile phones is a double-edged sword; they provide you with freedom you could otherwise not enjoy when on a standby duty, however, they can be invasive when you do want privacy. In the days before mobile phones you had the option to answer the phone if it rang on a day off, or if you had an answerphone it was possible to 'screen' any incoming call. The same logic applies with calls/text to a mobile; it's your choice whether to respond to the text message, or face the possible alternative of an early morning call to report for duty.

I believe it needs also to be sent to the Operations Director, Chief Pilot, and most especially Head of Cabin Services. The latter often has "risen through the ranks", and due to the lack of information, as discussed previously, has no knowledge of what the Commander has responsibility for, when it comes to cabin crew.

BAD VIBRATIONS

The cabin crew, at all levels, within my airline receive NO information on the Commander's responsibilities.

This article was taken from the NASA CALLBACK newsletter (Aviation Safety Reporting System) March 2003 Issue and shows the importance of good communication between the cabin and flight deck:

Surely it falls on the shoulders of the Head of Cabin Services to rectify this situation.

As suggested, we have brought this matter to the attention of senior Flight Operations managers, Flight Safety Officers and Cabin Crew managers of the principal UK airlines. Some have confirmed that the matters raised in this and other similar reports are already addressed in their training programmes.

Cabin Crews often provide information that helps to clarify or confirm a problem that the Flight Crew is already working. In this report, however, a Flight Attendant alerted the Captain to a problem that would not have become apparent in the cockpit until the situation became much worse.

As a reminder, JAR-OPS 1 recognises the need for all members of an aircraft crew to be aware of the respective roles of each member of that crew. Operations Manual procedures and cabin crew training are required to include information and procedures on crew responsibilities and the authority of the Commander. These procedures are required, as a minimum, to include the need to report to the Commander any incident that could endanger the safe operation of the aircraft and any failure or malfunction

While the #2 Flight Attendant and I were working the beverage cart, we heard a loud bang and felt a vibration. I notified the Captain ... and then saw a cabin window that appeared to be slightly cracked. On closer inspection, I noticed that it was cracked all the way up and the outer panel was bulging away from the aircraft ... I notified the Captain of the severity of the window problem. We had only enough empty seats to move the passengers seated two rows forward and two rows aft of the cracked window ... The beverage service was stopped and we prepared the cabin for landing ... The Captain had to slowly decompress the cabin when he got down to 10,000 feet. His descent was very slow due to the fragility of the window ... After mechanics inspected the window, they agreed that we were very lucky that the flight ended without incident.