

# CHIRP

Confidential Human-Factors  
Incident Reporting Programme

# Aviation FEEDBACK



Edition 74 | July 2021

# CABIN CREW



## Refresh and renew

If you haven't been able to fly for a while, it's important to prepare for it, start focusing on the role and freshen-up your knowledge

Well over a year ago the UK went into its first national lockdown, now phrases such as 'red lists', 'quarantine hotels', 'traffic light systems' and 'vaccine passports' are commonly heard. With many crew still on furlough and aircraft parked up, the hope is that summer brings with it more sunshine and options to travel again.

Another phrase that you may have heard now in numerous settings is 'build back better'. Aviation has changed due to the global pandemic. At CHIRP we are trying to evolve with that change.

Twenty years ago this July, Cabin Crew FEEDBACK was first published, some of you may even remember being on airport standby and seeing the yellow pages of the CHIRP newsletter being read around the room or during turnarounds on the aircraft. Edition 70 of Cabin Crew FEEDBACK, which

was published in December 2019, had 2,000+ copies printed. Edition 73 in February 2021 only 360 copies, this was predominantly related to reducing the risk of infection being passed on paper.

However, with a focus on sustainability, CHIRP are starting to move towards being more digital. CHIRP FEEDBACK has subscribers who receive the newsletter via email as soon as it is published. To subscribe to CHIRP Cabin Crew FEEDBACK newsletter please [click here](#) or visit our website [www.chirp.co.uk](http://www.chirp.co.uk)

FEEDBACK is also available to view on the CHIRP app. Improving the CHIRP app is a 'work in progress', so watch this space. For those of you on social media, you can also 'like' the CHIRP Facebook page and/or follow us on Twitter at <https://www.facebook.com/CHIRPAviation> and [@CHIRP\\_Aviation](https://twitter.com/CHIRP_Aviation) / Twitter

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In a recent advertising campaign by a well-known international airline, the role of a cabin crew member was described as 'A multilingual ambassador and first-aider who is an expert in hospitality and crisis management. Able to ensure safety at 30,000 feet in the air – with a smile'.

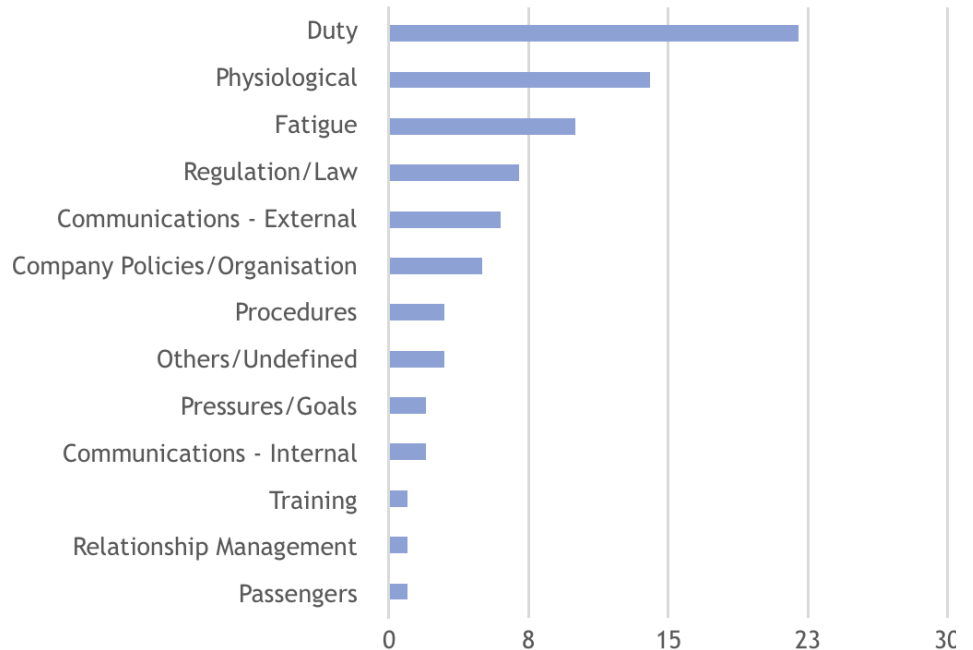
As cabin crew, we wear many hats, not just at work but on our days off as well. Cabin crew are highly trained in safety and emergency procedures, first aid, security, dangerous goods and customer service. The skills gained as a cabin crew member are transferrable to a world outside of aviation, and during the pandemic some crew have worked in supermarkets, as vaccinators, care home workers and volunteers in a variety of settings.

Although many crew have still been flying during the pandemic, if you haven't, it's important to start focusing back on the role, refamiliarise yourself. I echo my comments from the last edition of Cabin Crew FEEDBACK, crew understandably may be feeling nervous or apprehensive about returning to flying. It is therefore important that you prepare for this and refresh your knowledge before returning.

Take advantage of any resources that your airline has made available to you, read your manuals and take your time to ensure that you are confident and competent to carry out your role safely. The CAA have recently issued advice which includes points on Preparation, Things to be Aware of, In-flight and Sharing Experiences. To view this information on the CAA website click on the following link and look under the section titled - [Helping to have the safest return to commercial flying.](#)

If you have continued to fly throughout, you will know that we are in an industry with constant change and, with that, comes learning. The SOPs are designed to protect you, colleagues and customers and it is important to review them regularly to ensure you are up to date. Complacency can be dangerous. Colleagues may be returning to work after over a year off flying, not just

## CHIRP Cabin Crew Safety Reports Jan 1st - July 13th 2021



aircrew but engineers, schedulers, handlers etc, it is important to be patient with each other, communicate with your team and don't make assumptions.

The aim of CHIRP is to contribute to the enhancement of aviation safety in the UK, and maritime safety worldwide, by providing a totally independent confidential (not anonymous) reporting system for all individuals employed in or associated with these industries. CHIRP always protects the identity of our reporters. We are a confidential programme and we only retain a reporter's personal details for as long as we need to keep in contact with them.

Important lessons are learnt by honest and open safety reporting. Reporting our own mistakes, errors and non-compliances is easier said than done, but in doing so we can learn from each other. Submitting a safety report to your operator also allows their internal SMS (Safety Management Systems) to monitor and pinpoint specific issues and trends and take action where appropriate to do so.

Since January 2021, CHIRP has received 53 cabin crew safety reports. These reports are categorised and a report

could fall into more than one category, for example a report relating to fatigue will probably also relate to duty. Reporting rates are much lower than usual due to the low levels of flying at present. The majority of these reports were classified as 'Duty'. The CAA has issued several airlines with temporary FTL exemptions under Article 71(1) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 (the basic Regulation) to extend the basic FDP limits and rest requirements in order that essential services can continue. All FTL exemptions granted are being monitored and reviewed by the operators and the CAA. Each exemption approved by the CAA is specific to a route and has an expiry date.

CHIRP frequently receives reports about high temperatures on board the aircraft, especially during the summer season. The temperature in an aircraft cabin can increase by at least 2-3°C when carrying a full passenger load, even with the air conditioning on. As there is no 'legal' requirement for an aircraft to cease operating should a certain maximum (or minimum) temperature be reached, passenger and crew comfort is usually the primary consideration. Please refresh yourself with your SOPs regarding opening doors for ventilation and whether this is





permitted or not, think about what risks open doors pose and what mitigations are in place? Doors being opened outside of normal operation, such as for ventilation, could present a risk of a fall from height, or a slide deployment. Always follow your SOPs and communicate with other crew and ground teams as appropriate.

Hydration is also important, not just for the crew but for the passengers as well, consider a water service if necessary. Liaise with the SCCM and/or the flight crew about reducing the cabin

temperature before landing, this can make the cabin temperature cooler than it otherwise would have been on landing and assist with keeping the cabin cooler when on the ground. Also keep the flight crew informed and they can make decisions regarding APU/ground power for cabin ventilation in accordance with your company procedures. Small things such as closing window blinds, switching off IFE and dimming lights on turnarounds can also make a difference.

**Jennifer Curran, CHIRP Cabin Crew Programme Manager**



## COMMENTS ON PREVIOUS FEEDBACKS

### No Comments?

You may notice that this latest edition is published in our new look CHIRP format, what do you think? Let us know. Here at CHIRP we very much value your inputs and comments, positive or not. We recognise that there is always room for improvement, and we want to ensure that we are giving you valuable content to support and enhance safety. Please do get in touch at [mail@chirp.co.uk](mailto:mail@chirp.co.uk) and let us know what you think about this edition, or anything else (that's safety related).



## Reports

### Report No.1 – Pressured Pre-departure Checks

**Report Text:** When securing for our flight to [Airport] the flight crew indicated the aircraft position as entering the runway by using the cabin chimes. At this point, working in the economy cabin, the cabin secure was almost complete. The issue that is well known on this route means this element of the SOPs is particularly challenging. We confirmed the 'secure' of the cabin with one another at the points we met in the cabin, and then together in the rear Galley. At this stage, the SCCM arrived we confirmed the 'secure'. As she was walking to her seat to pass the 'secure' onto the flight crew, she was called by the FC with the Purser call chimes. She took this call at Doors 3. I cannot remember if she had time to inform "Cabin Crew take your seats for Take Off", but in the time I had to check my work device was in flight safe mode and walk from Doors 4 to Doors 3, the FC had begun their acceleration on the runway. I had been delayed getting to my seat by a passenger who had taken their bag out from under the seat, and so I

had not reached my seat before TO had commenced. I was in a position where I had to make a decision as to whether to take a passenger seat, or my crew seat. I was secured in my crew seat for take-off

**Company Comment:** Based on the information in the report, the root cause appears to be communication. Efficient and reliable communication between the cabin crew is an important resource for safety as well as general day-to-day working. In this report (particularly as the reporter highlighted it is a well-known issue for the route they are referring to), effective communication between the crew, SCCM and the flight crew during the briefing would have ensured all colleagues were aware of potential challenges that could have led to an organised, safer approach. Potentially, if the flight crew been made aware sooner via the chain of command, a decision could have been made to ensure that the aircraft was prepared more effectively so that the cabin crew could be seated in advance of take-off. Within our policies and procedures manual there are references to communication during 'sterile times' that pertain to concerns about safety and security. It also refers to crew being seated as soon as pre-flight safety activity is completed, i.e. cabin

secure. The key learnings from the report are, not to assume colleagues know if a particular station is more problematic than others, ensure a safety report is completed to notify the operator of recurrent themes from a particular station, ensure communication remains effective.

**CAA Comment:** The flight crew should not be advised that the cabin is secure until all cabin crew are seated. Part of the pre-take-off checks are to verify that the cabin is secure: if this check is given before all crew are seated there is a risk of the take-off being commenced with cabin members out of their seats.

Cabin checks conducted by the CAA have identified occasions where cabin crew are not taking their seats promptly after completing safety related duties and/or are performing non-safety related duties, delaying the cabin secure notification, or not being seated if the check has already been given to the flight crew.

### “CHIRP Response”

If you know that the cabin secure is likely to take longer, discuss this with your senior crew member and the flight crew prior to the flight, or as soon as you realise that you have an issue.





Situational awareness, time pressure, communication, lack of recency, distractions, workload management and decision making are all well documented human factor hazards which will have been explored during your training (think of the swiss cheese model - James Reason 2000). By following SOPs and effectively communicating, we start to reduce risk and enhance safety.

What would you consider if in this situation? Did the senior crew member pass the cabin secure to the flight crew whilst at doors 3? Was the fact that the SCCM was at doors 3 communicated to the flight crew? What would you have done with the passenger's bag? Being proactive with stowage of bags during boarding helps to save time when securing the cabin for take-off. If you had received notification from the flight crew that the aircraft was entering the runway, would you have taken the time to turn your work device into flight safe mode or would you have prioritised getting to your crew seat? The latter two are SOPs to be adhered to but on the day, you sometimes have to make decisions based on the individual situation that you are in, maybe tomorrow you would make a different one. When making decisions, it is the responsibility of all crew members to not just keep the passengers safe but themselves safe too.

## Report No.2 – Chipped off Paint on Wings & Unusual Rumbling Noise

**Report Text #1:** Before departure I noticed what looked like black marks on top of the wings. Looking closer it seemed like these marks were areas where paint had chipped off. The biggest was about the size of a tea towel. The smallest patch on the right wing was about the size of a tennis ball. I informed the Captain and he advised that it was in the log book. He also told me that this issue had started to happen on the [Aircraft type] and the company were aware of it.

**Report Text #2:** A colleague and I were in the rear galley during the cruise when we heard a very strange and loud rumbling

noise coming from under the floor area. It sounded like the noise was external and my colleague commented that it was similar to the sound made when the under carriage is lowered. The noise occurred twice within a one-minute period. I reported this to the Captain who asked if it was a rumbling noise which I confirmed. He advised that these sorts of noises had been reported before on this aircraft. I visited the forward parts of the aircraft to ask if any other cabin crew had heard any strange sounds. The responses were all negative. Whilst I was gone, my colleague advised me that the same noise had occurred twice more. We monitored the area, but no further rumbles were experienced.

### “ CHIRP Response ”

It is important for Cabin Crew to raise concerns about things that might be out of the ordinary, even when they involve issues that are somewhat remote from their everyday working role; this of course also demonstrates great CRM. Aircraft paint does have a safety connection and there are defined limitations and requirements regarding any defects that are variously documented in the Minimum Equipment List (MEL), Hold Item List (HIL) Carried Forward/Deferred Defects (ADD's) and Damage Charts, to name but a few. Cabin crew cannot be expected to know these limitations and so the reporter did the right thing in contacting the flight crew. Generally, minor areas of chipped paint will not be an immediate safety priority, but it is sensible to refer any concerns as soon as possible so that the flight crew have the opportunity to review them with the engineers if necessary. With reference to the noise under the rear galley floor, the reporter's actions were again spot on, and reporting the flight phase is always helpful. The Captain will assess whether the information needs to be acted on there and then or passed to the engineers for subsequent investigation.

Effective cabin crew and flight crew communication is vital to the safety of every flight. Anything that a crew member considers unusual should be reported via the SCCM or directly to the flight crew. Consider what you

are reporting, in this case, the crew member was able to relate the size of the chipped off paint patches to a tea towel and a tennis ball. If you are reporting a smell, what does the smell compare too, is it electrical or like fuel for example? An unexplained loud noise, what does it sound like, is it constant? Where is the smell and/or noise coming from, row 10, the rear galley, Lav F or Lav 54? Will the flight crew know where Lav F or Lav 54 is? You could consider saying the Lav by door 2R for example, using the doors to help build the flight crews situational awareness. Is the smell/noise on the left or the right hand-side of the aircraft? This type of specific information is not just important when dealing with engineering issues, it is just as important, for example, when dealing with a medical situation, a disruptive passenger or a fire on board. The key as always is to communicate.

## Report No.3 – Ultra Long Haul (ULH/EFTL) Flight

**Report Text :** My initial roster included 1 ULH and 2 other flights; after swapping, I ended up with the ULH, a [BBB], a 2 nights [CCC] and a [DDD]. The [CCC] was changed to a ULH because of the current situation in India, and when the [DDD] got cancelled, I was put on standby and then given another ULH. Bringing my total number of ULH to 3 this month.

After the government decided that we were allowed back into [CCC], the airline made the decision to change those trips to one-nighters. I was delighted that my ULH changed to a one nighter, I have already done 2 of those ULHs and spent most of my days off this month recovering from them, so it came as a relief that I wouldn't have to do another one. But although the night stop I was given was not cancelled, I was taken off it and then put back onto another ULH. I have emailed crew support, crewing, my manager and the duty manager and asked for explanations, expressing my concerns over having to operate 3 of those ULHs this month and my overall tiredness, anxiety, stress and frustration because of this coming third ULH.



I have received a reply from crew support thanking me for my question and forwarding it to pre-ops while “fully appreciating how challenging the ULH’s duties must be, and how the company was so grateful for my adaptability to support with these types of trips”. The reply from crewing was that there were too many crew on the trip, so they simply put me back on my original duty; here I would like to point out that my original duty was never a [BBB].

**Company Comment:** With the information available in this disidentified report, it is difficult to provide a detailed response as to the rationale for this roster and how it had been built. However, rosters are built in accordance with the CAA Exemption that has been granted for Ultra Long Haul duties. In terms of rest requirements, we plan for an additional day above the CAA’s requirements post-ULH trip, recognising that the recovery from these trips can be a challenge. Prior to a ULH trip, crew have to have a period free of duty including 3 local nights. The post trip minimum rest is 4 local nights (we actually for 5 local nights) prior to operating the next duty. Safety gates also put in place to prevent an excessive amount of long duties. We are no longer currently operating any ULH duties.

The reporter followed the correct course of action by raising their concerns with their manager in the first instance along with the crewing team. However, if an individual feels fatigued or does not feel that they are fit for their duty, they should

report unfit operate and speak with their manager. Our team of crew co-ordinators are also always available, should the reporter need to contact them.

**CAA Comment:** The operators have a restriction on the number of flights rostered in a month based on the days off requirements before and after any such rotation. The exemption also clearly states the operator shall ensure the workload of any such flights are shared across the crew members on that fleet. The CAA FO Oversight Team is currently looking into how the distribution of such duties are being applied.

### “ CHIRP Response ”

As a result of the COVID 19 pandemic ULH / EFTL flights have become a necessity. As mentioned in Edition 73 of Cabin Crew FEEDBACK, some operators have applied for FTL Temporary Exemptions under Article 71(1) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 (the basic Regulation) to extend the basic FDP limits and rest requirements to allow these essential services to continue. All granted FTL Exemptions are being monitored and reviewed by the operators and the CAA. Each Exemption approved by the CAA is specific to a route and has an expiry date.

There are things in place to try and mitigate the fatigue that can be caused by operating these types of duties. For example, if you live over 90 minutes away from the departure airport, some operators are providing crew with a

local hotel so that their commute into work is as short as it can be. Some operators also require each crew member to complete a fatigue report after each trip, so that fatigue can be monitored.

As per EASA FTL stipulations, operators should ensure that flight duty periods are planned in a way that enables crew members to remain sufficiently free from fatigue so that they can operate to a satisfactory level of safety under all circumstances. Operators should consider the relationship between the frequency and pattern of flight duty periods and rest periods and consider the cumulative effects of undertaking long duty hours combined with minimum rest periods. In the case of this report, the crew member was not initially rostered for three ULH trips; however, due to a trip swap and a cancellation they did end up operating three. It is important to remember that there is always a responsibility on each cabin crew member to assess whether you are fit to operate the planned duty period and report as such to the company if you have either not been able to achieve sufficient rest or think you could be suffering from the effects of fatigue. Fatigue reports provide evidence for the company and/or the CAA to see that a trend may be occurring due to the rostering of flights. Crew must not operate when they are unfit to do so, by doing so the crew member would potentially be creating a safety risk to themselves and others.

## CHIRP

Aviation and Maritime Confidential Incident Reporting

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