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## Fatigue – it's a shared responsibility for safer skies

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**Jennifer Curran**  
Cabin Crew Programme Manager

Year on year since the COVID-19 pandemic, fatigue has consistently remained one of the top-3 key concerns reported to CHIRP by cabin crew which is why it's often discussed in these editorials. Fatigue isn't about feeling tired; while tiredness is a normal response to a long shift, fatigue is a serious issue. ICAO defines fatigue as: 'A physiological state of reduced mental or physical performance capability resulting from sleep loss, extended wakefulness,

circadian phase, and/or workload (mental / physical activity) that can impair a person's alertness and ability to perform safety-related operational duties.' Fatigue can impair alertness, decision-making, reaction times, and communication.

In airline operations fatigue can stem from a variety of factors: long duty hours, night flying, early starts,

late starts, circadian rhythm disruptions and short recovery times between shifts. These factors aren't just an issue for cabin crew, they can affect ground staff, air traffic controllers, engineers and anyone else involved in flight operations. Ultimately fatigue can impact safety across the entire industry, which is why it's something we all need to be aware of and manage together.

Effective fatigue management requires a joint effort between operators and crew.

- **Operators** hold the responsibility to design rosters that prioritise rest and minimise the accumulation of fatigue. Fatigue Risk Management Systems (FRMS) which many airlines now adopt, help ensure that schedules are scientifically based and consider human limitations. However, even the best rosters can't fully eliminate fatigue risks.
- **Crew members**, in turn, have the personal responsibility to use their rest periods wisely. Managing lifestyle, sleep hygiene, diet, exercise, and minimising social or domestic commitments before duty is essential. A well-structured roster is ineffective if adequate rest is not achieved during off-duty hours (some operators even recommend appropriate nap lengths and identify optimal times for naps within a scheduled roster to help combat fatigue).

Equally important is a robust culture of fatigue reporting. When a crew member feels safe and supported to report fatigue, without fear of reprisal, they provide vital data to operators. Reporting allows airlines to identify patterns, such as certain routes, flight pairings or times of year that are consistently fatiguing. Over time, this insight enables continuous improvement of rosters and fatigue mitigation strategies.

I recently attended a fatigue management course, where I learned about an operator who asks every pilot to report their KSS\* (Karolinska Sleepiness Scale) score at the top of descent. This data is submitted anonymously to a third-party company for analysis. The third-party then reviews the data and suggests any necessary adjustments to improve fatigue management based on the findings. The review of this data can help identify patterns and specific conditions that might lead to higher fatigue scores, like flight scheduling, crew rest periods, or workload during specific parts of the flight. This is a proactive way to manage fatigue, but for it to work, everyone needs to feel supported and encouraged to report their fatigue without worrying about any negative consequences.

Reporting safety-related concerns, including fatigue, is an act of professionalism and a commitment to both personal well-being and operational safety. A 'just safety' culture requires trust, transparency and cooperation. When crew members report concerns, it directly contributes to safer operations. It's essential that crew feel that their operator fosters a non-punitive culture where reports are seen as opportunities for learning and improvement and by treating fatigue management as a shared responsibility, ensuring that both rosters and personal choices support rest and by embracing honest reporting, the aviation industry can significantly mitigate its risks. Ultimately, a well-rested cabin crew member is a safer, more effective crew member and every flight benefits from that.

**Stay safe,**

**Jennifer Curran**

\*The Karolinska Sleepiness Scale (KSS) measures the subjective level of sleepiness using a 9 point scale 1= extremely alert to 9 = very sleepy, great effort to keep awake, fighting sleep.

## EASA Conversation Aviation

EASA has recently released the Summer Edition of Conversation Aviation magazine [conversation\\_aviation\\_07\\_single.pdf](#), which features a range of insightful articles, including pieces on Fatigue and Communication.

## Airport Security Special

CHIRP has recently received a number of concerning reports about security screening at UK airports. These reports come from across the industry – flight crew, engineers, cabin crew, and ground handlers alike.

### So, what does this have to do with safety?

All our reporters highlight a troubling acceptance of poor treatment at airport security.

The effort required to stay calm – especially when you're now going to be late for report or faced with inconsistency – can be considerable. Many crew report feeling anxious, frustrated and under pressure even before their duty day has begun. These stressors, though seemingly unrelated to flight operations, can significantly affect human performance and, ultimately, safety.

To be clear, we are not advocating for security checks to be waived for crew or for standards to be lowered. Quite the opposite. Operating crew consistently express strong support for rigorous screening, recognising that it protects everyone – crew, passengers, and the wider public – by guarding against rogue elements. Crew also fully understand that they themselves are a potential hazard and that an aircraft in the wrong hands is a serious threat.

However, airports and airlines have a responsibility to ensure that security checks are conducted professionally and consistently. Otherwise, the knock-on effects on crew, who are humans not robots, can have unintended safety consequences. For example, one pilot reported being so wound up by their treatment through security, that they were still significantly distracted by it well into the flight. This is a clear example of how pre-duty stress can affect operational focus.

### What is CHIRP doing?

When CHIRP receives reports of security-related incidents that could impact flight safety, we raise them with the relevant airport and airline safety and security managers. Airports often resist change and argue that security regulations are being fully complied with, but with little regard for how the checks are conducted. There appears to be minimal concern for transparency, consistency, or the mental state of crew following these interactions. Worryingly, security staff often have little understanding of the safety-critical responsibilities crew members take on immediately after leaving the checkpoint.

## Our advice for crew

While CHIRP continues to advocate on behalf of crew facing poor treatment at security, we also offer the following guidance for those dealing with this issue daily:

- Remain calm and professional. As hard as it may be, do not rise to provocation or complain during the screening process. Stay quiet, compliant and composed.
- Check in with yourself after screening. Recognising our own stress is notoriously difficult. If you feel angry, anxious, frustrated, or upset, try to pause and reset. Take a moment for yourself. If your focus is disrupted, it's your responsibility to restore your mindset before reporting/continuing with your duty.
- Report your concerns. Operators rely on data to address issues with airport security. If you encounter problems, report them to your operator. If you don't feel comfortable doing this internally, CHIRP is here for you. We provide a confidential, impartial, and independent reporting option.

## Final Thoughts

Security checks are essential, but they should never have a detrimental effect on crew wellbeing, operational readiness, or aviation safety. Change starts with raising awareness and reporting the issues to airlines and the other companies who employ the actual staff affected.

# Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Victimisation (BHDV)

The CHIRP Aviation Programme also provides a facility for confidential reporting of Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Victimisation (BHDV) where there is an identifiable safety-related concern. CHIRP has no specific expertise or resources to investigate BHDV reports. CHIRP's role is to aggregate data to build a picture of the prevalence of BHDV in the aviation sector. See our BHDV page on the CHIRP website for further information. [CHIRP's role in reporting Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Victimisation \(BHDV\)](#)

## Report to CHIRP!

Reporting to CHIRP is easy by using either our [website](#) portal or our App (scan the appropriate QR code shown or search for 'CHIRP Aviation' – ignoring the birdsong apps that may come up!). In our reporting portal you'll be presented with a series of fields to complete, of which you fill in as much as you feel is relevant – not every field is mandatory, but the more information you can give us the better. Although you'll need to enter your email address to get access to the portal, none of your details are shared outside CHIRP, and we have our own

independent secure database and IT systems to ensure confidentiality.



## Reports

### Report No1 - CC6878 – Report time pressures

#### Initial Report

I had a report time of HH:20 and at HH:15 the SCCM came to find me to ask if I was here. I said yes and they then said I hadn't checked in yet and left. I still had 5 minutes to spare and it's not fair to be pressured to sign in early so they can start their briefing earlier than scheduled. I have had this before from other SCCMs with pressure to start briefing early, but I think this comes from higher up with pressures to get the briefing done and to get onto the aircraft as soon as possible.

#### Company Comment

We contacted the operations team regarding the content of this report, and no communication has been passed on to SCCMs to start their briefing earlier. They simply cannot do so, as they are required to report at the time designated on their roster to comply with flight time limitations and flight duty period obligations. Crew are encouraged to follow the times on the briefing sheet, and being based in a large airport, this framework should be adhered to as much as possible. If crew are experiencing difficulties, we encourage them to report these, as this feedback will be used to inform the operations trends when we share insight to the trends we've identified.

#### CAA Comment

Cabin crew cannot be required to perform any duty or part of a duty at the behest of the operator or personnel employed by the operator outside of a duty or flying duty period. Cabin crew often arrive at the place of report early for a flight in order to allow time to prepare, however this by choice and cannot be required.

#### CHIRP Comment

'Pressure' remains one of the top-3 key issues reported to CHIRP. While it might be tempting to get a head start on the day, SCCMs should avoid asking crew to report earlier than scheduled, as this can contribute to feelings of pressure, known as perceived pressure, from the outset. That said, an SCCM asking if everyone is ready is typically just a courtesy, a polite way to get the ball rolling. Perhaps the day before, they'd had a

crew member forget to sign in – distraction also being a common human factor.

Whilst some crew members snooze the alarm, rush out the door with a piece of toast, and just grab the final bus from the crew car park with a minute to spare, other crew members prefer to get to work early and have a coffee and breakfast before reporting. However you like to start your day, your report and your maximum FDP begin at the time stated on your roster (subject to delayed report etc). Be mindful not to arrive too early before your report start time; delays are common in aviation and a short duty can soon become a lot longer than anticipated.

## Report No2 - CC6918 – Management culture within the airline

### Initial Report

I operated a four-sector duty, returning on the final sector which should have taken 50 minutes, and took nearly 2.5hr. In appalling weather at {airport}, we went around twice, held in between in unpleasant conditions and made a final attempt at landing at our diversion airport, {airport}. The experience for all involved was most unpleasant. I have many years of Cabin crew experience but was unprepared for the fear I felt on the day in question. Many passengers were ill, most others in a state of heightened anxiety. On landing, lengthy delays ensued finding a stand and then enabling safe deplaning of the passengers. The cargo door was opened which immediately caught the wind and blew the aircraft sideways. It was necessary to reposition the aircraft before we could leave, close it up and deadhead back to base.

During this time, we witnessed a phone call to the Captain, wherein they appeared to be grilled about not getting the aircraft back to base. The Captain was told that the aircraft was needed and to explain why this was not happening. Our Captain outlined the situation very eloquently, the fact that they had flown 6 approaches that day, in demanding conditions. Also, that their colleagues were in no fit state to continue.

We all listened aghast to the exchange, made with someone in the office. We were in a state of shock when we subsequently got into our taxi to return to base – dumbfounded at how dislocated management were from the reality of the aircraft on that day. Our profound disillusionment with the airline management turned to anger when we heard that, at that very time, whilst in the taxi, we also heard about another incident which was additionally concerning. Shocked beyond disbelief, this felt at the time like a rubber stamping of our Captain's decision, and an own goal for the company. I am only thankful for having a resilient, and proactive Captain that day. My biggest concern going forward is that the same issue may occur with a less hardened Flight Crew which could result in us flying in unsafe conditions.

### CHIRP Comment

It's important to acknowledge the emotional and physical toll that such days can have on all crew. Facing repeated go-arounds, poor weather and managing distressed passengers is not a 'normal' day and these events can push even the most experienced crew to their limits and can be very impactful.

The commander has the ultimate authority on the aircraft. They make critical decisions, oversee the entire flight and are responsible for the safety of everyone on board. Their training includes assessments in decision-making, operating under pressure and communication, amongst others.

These skills are sometimes called upon when relaying information to other teams, who may be working in windowless offices, in another region of the country, or even in a different country altogether. These teams are often under pressure themselves to keep the operation running smoothly and, unless informed otherwise, may be unaware of specific events occurring on the flight. It's also worth bearing in mind that there may be factors at play that crew members are not immediately aware of such as slot delays etc.

## Report No3 - CC6920 – Refreshment Breaks

### Initial Report

'When a refreshment break is taken onboard, during this period a crewmember may be required to assist colleagues in the cabin at short notice in the event of an abnormal or emergency situation. Therefore, they are required to be alert and ready to act'.

The above needs addressing. My operator should not be dictating how a crew member takes their break. Some of our duty days are long and arduous, crew commute from all over and to add we have report times at 4am down route. If a colleague wants to close their eyes on their break this is their right to do so. This from a safety perspective could make all the difference in an emergency situation and making the right decision. This needs addressing as a priority. As a SCCM, manager I refuse to uphold this ridiculous rule and safety is paramount. A break is a break and as a human being if you're tired and need to rest your eyes then you should be able to do so. This needs resolving and communication to the entire cabin crew community.

### Company Comment

We recognise that no two flights are identical, and while the likelihood of an emergency or medical incident occurring is low, it cannot be completely ruled out. Therefore, we have carried out a comprehensive risk assessment to ensure we are fully prepared to manage any situation that may arise, whether that involves a fire drill, a medical emergency, or handling a disruptive passenger.

Regulatory requirements, together with our own hazard identification processes (which covers all scenarios such as aircraft types, variants, minimum legal crew complements and reduced crew complements in unforeseen circumstances), require us to mitigate and minimise the risk of any safety or security event escalating beyond control. These regulations state that cabin crew must be ready to act and respond if needed. For instance, guidance specifies that cabin crew members taking in-flight rest should be able to return to operational duty and reach their designated cabin stations in the event of an emergency (for reference: AMC2 ORO.CC.205(d) – Reduction of the number of cabin crew members during ground operations and in unforeseen circumstances).



If a safety-related situation arises that necessitates escalation, once landed, crew must communicate with the operations team to ensure appropriate support is provided. This may involve immediate support or roster adjustments depending on the nature of the incident.

Where Class 1 rest is not required to extend the maximum flight duty period (FDP), and crew are on a refreshment break within the cabin during which they are relieved of operational duties for a specified period, they must remain alert to their surroundings. Resting (eyes closed) or sleeping during this time does not comply with the requirements of the regulation. Crew are expected to stay attentive to visual and auditory signals, as well as to colleagues who remain on duty. In the event of an emergency occurring during a break or in-flight rest, the operating crew will assess whether resting crew are required to resume operational duties.

We have planned procedures in place for situations with reduced crew complements, including adaptations to drills such as merging roles during the fire drill. The aim of staying alert and ready to assist is precisely to ensure that if you are required to support your colleagues during a safety, security, or medical event, you will be prepared to do so. Additionally, on longer flights where FDP extension is required with Class 1 rest, the SCCM will liaise with the flight crew to review rest requirements and duty hours accordingly.

When reporting for duty, crew members are responsible for ensuring they are fit to fly and adequately rested. UK Air Ops CS.FTL.A.200 recommends that crew consider arranging temporary accommodation closer to their home base if their commute usually exceeds 90 minutes. Additionally, recognising the challenges posed by shift work, crew are encouraged to follow NHS guidance on best practices for managing tiredness and fatigue.

### CAA Comment:

ORO.CC.205 requires that whenever passengers are on board an aircraft, the minimum number of cabin crew members required in accordance with point ORO.CC.100 shall be present in the aircraft and ready to act.

Alleviation from this is permitted for the purpose of providing in-flight rest during the cruise phase, either in accordance with ORO.FTL.205(e) or as a fatigue mitigation implemented by the operator. Where this is implemented, specific procedures are required to be described in the operations manual, including for the in-flight rest of the senior cabin crew member, that ensure at all times appropriate passenger handling and efficient management of any abnormal or emergency situations.

Cabin crew on a refreshment break are still to be ready to act in the event of an abnormal occurrence.

### CHIRP Comment

There are two main types of rest; a nutritional break and inflight rest.

1. In accordance with UK Retained Regulation ORO.FTL.240 **Nutrition**, a meal opportunity is required (although the provision of food is not). [ORO.FTL.240 Nutrition](#)

*(a) During the FDP there shall be the opportunity for a meal and drink in order to avoid any detriment to a crew member's performance, especially when the FDP exceeds 6 hours.*

*(b) An operator shall specify in its operations manual how the crew member's nutrition during FDP is ensured.*

For some operators this meal opportunity may be a set period of time, whereas other operators state that crew must take regular breaks and take nutrition as required throughout the duty (no set time is specified).

**2. Inflight rest** – If the maximum FDP needs to be extended, then 'inflight rest' is required. If the FDP does not need to be extended then inflight rest is not required.

While some duties can be long and physically demanding, it is not appropriate for a crew member to simply "close their eyes" unless in a suitable rest facility not visible to the passengers. During both nutritional breaks and inflight rest crew 'may be required to assist colleagues in the cabin at short notice in the event of an abnormal or emergency situation'.

It is the crew member's responsibility to manage and utilise rest periods effectively in order to minimise fatigue. Cabin crew should not operate when they are unfit to do so. In exceptional cases, if rest is essential, the crew member must inform the SCCM and the Commander as there may be instances where the crew member needs to stand down, remove any identifying items of uniform and rest in a passenger seat.

## Report No4 - CC6930 – Storm Eowyn Departure

### Initial Report

I write this report to highlight a concern of mine with regards to my flight from {Airport A} to {Airport B}. Approximately 17:30 on the DD/MM/YY a government alert was sent to our crew devices advising us not to travel due to adverse weather caused by storm Eowyn. Upon checking the Company app, I could see that all flights from {Airport A} to {Airport B} from 08:00 onwards until 18:30 had been cancelled, however our flight departing before 08:00 was still on time. The early flight from {Airport C} and following flights were all also cancelled, as well as our link up to {Airport D} later in the day.

With this in mind, at pick up I again checked the status of our flight, it showed as running on time. Upon arriving at {Airport A} all flights apart from ours and one other to {Airport D} had been cancelled due to the building storm. This to me was a very telling sign as to how serious the storm was. We boarded and encountered a slot restriction by which point the wind had pushed close to the aircraft limits. Other aircraft were having rejected take offs due to the winds and multiple operators were cancelling flights.

It was decided that we would push back and wait for "a window" to take off. We eventually got airborne and thankfully safely made it to {Airport B}, with thanks to our pilots, who I have absolutely no doubts would keep us safe.

I do however want to highlight the unease of the situation we were all put in this morning. I'm not questioning the safety of our flight as I have already stated that I have confidence in our pilots. However, potentially they could have been pressurised to

depart. I do question why our flight was “pushed” operationally to depart when others leaving at the same time, whether operated by us or other airlines from both {Airport A} and from other local airports were cancelled due to the same weather we were about to depart in.

Is it not operationally irresponsible to allow our customers to travel to the airport when government alerts advising against travel have been sent? On the note of government alerts, multiple customers received these whilst taxiing to the runway.

### Company Comment

From an operational point of view, decisions about whether a flight can safely go ahead are always made using the most up-to-date information available and in line with our standard procedures. Each airline has its own set of guidelines, and weather conditions are carefully considered as part of that process.

When it comes to safety, we always operate our aircraft within the strict limits set by the manufacturer—this includes factors like wind and other weather conditions. Our pilots are well-trained, regularly assessed, and fully prepared to operate safely in a wide range of situations, including strong winds.

We also understand that government travel advisories can raise concern. These advisories are issued based on a wide range of public safety factors and may not directly reflect whether it's safe for an aircraft to operate. Since different aircraft have different performance limits, it's possible for some flights to be cancelled while others can continue safely.

### CAA Comment

Whilst ultimately the decision to continue, divert or terminate a flight rests with the Commander such a decision is often made based on information from a number of sources which may not always be evident to the cabin crew and may be perceived as commercial pressure.

### CHIRP Comment

As we know, UK weather can be unpredictable and we can often experience 4 seasons in a single day. We appreciate why the reporter was concerned as the weather was atrocious and as the reporter mentions there was advice to simply not travel. However, not all passengers are local; some may have stayed overnight in airport hotels or arrived via connecting flights. It is not the role of the airline in this case to advise customers whether or not to travel. Rather, it is up to individuals to review the available guidance and make informed decisions accordingly.

Although this report raises concerns about the flight crew potentially feeling ‘pressurised’ to depart, it also brings up an important discussion around resilience. There will always be pressures from various sources during a flight such as delays, full cabins, demanding passengers, operational constraints etc. What matters is how crew respond to these challenges, as this ultimately determines the end result and the amount of pressure experienced. This is often referred to as ‘perceived pressure’.

As highlighted in previous CHIRP reports, pilots are highly trained professionals, regularly tested in simulated

environments to ensure they can operate effectively under pressure. Flight crew use a wide range of information to make safe, informed decisions and behind the scenes, multiple teams are also working together to support operations and ensure the schedule runs as safely and efficiently as possible.

## Report No5 - CC6936 – Report Time adjusted for a delay

### Initial Report

My FDP and report time have been manipulated for company benefit. A text message and a roster notification was sent at HH:MM (2hrs25 before scheduled report) and I had a call from crewing at HH:MM (1hr55mins before scheduled report) but it was unsafe for me to read the text or take the call. I reported as normal at my rostered report time to find my flight was delayed by 55 mins. I could not check in for the flight without acknowledging the delay, which then changed my report time to HH:MM (55 minutes later). The system is set up, to prohibit the crew member to report at their scheduled report time which falsely adjusts the report time.

### Company Comment

Thank you for raising your concerns regarding the delayed reporting process and how your FDP and report time were handled.

In the Operations Manual, there are set procedures for delayed reporting at home base, outlining the responsibilities of both the crewmember and Crewing:

### Notification Timing

The manual states that Crewing must send delay notifications no more than 3 hours and no less than 2 hours before a UK report time. In your case, the text and Crew Portal update were sent 2 hours and 25 minutes before the scheduled report time, which aligns with the policy. The call from Crewing at 1 hour and 55 minutes before report time also appears to have been a follow-up, as outlined in the manual, since no response had been received.

### Crewmember Actions

If a crewmember has already left their place of rest, they are given options at [reference] to report as scheduled, then advise Crewing at check-in that they did not receive the delay notice prior to leaving their place of rest and have therefore reported on time.

### System Functionality – Unnotified Duty

As you've pointed out, the system does not allow check-in for duties marked as ‘unnotified’ — and a delayed duty that has not been acknowledged is treated in this way. This is an intentional safeguard which acts as a prompt for the crewmember to call Crewing or discuss with the crew check-in team. This is important not just to allow check-in, but also because Crewing may need to reassess whether the crewmember can continue to operate the flight under the FTL and FRM rules. This is outlined in [reference] of the procedure.

## Correct Procedure in This Scenario

When a delay notification hasn't been received or acknowledged before leaving your place of rest, the crewmember should report as scheduled and contact Crewing at check-in. At that point, Crewing will manually revert the duty to the original report time, assess the FDP limit and discuss any IFR/augmentation needs, which when completed, will allow check-in. This ensures compliance with both the Operations Manual, FRM policy and system controls.

## CAA Comment:

An operator may delay reporting for a flying duty in the event of unforeseen circumstances in accordance with the procedure for notification detailed in the operator's flight time limitations scheme. Where a crew member does not receive notification this should be communicated to the Commander and SCCM for the flight in question and the operator notified.

## CHIRP Comment

Under UK FTL regulations, an operator may delay a crew member's reporting time in unforeseen circumstances. The term 'unforeseen' refers to events that are unexpected or not predicted, although interpretations of this can vary between individuals.

This regulation enables operators to delay report times while preserving the maximum flight duty period (FDP). This flexibility is particularly useful when scheduled duties are close to the maximum FDP and unexpected delays occur.

A delayed reporting procedure can be initiated by the operator while the crew member is still at home or in suitable accommodation, provided the unforeseen event causing the delay happens before the start of the planned flight duty period.

- If the delay is less than 4 hours – the maximum FDP as originally planned, remains the same.
- If the delay is more than 4 hours – the maximum FDP will be shorter than the originally planned FDP, because the delayed reporting time has a limiting effect on it.

The regulations do not specify a length of time required to delay a report. However, procedures for delayed reporting must be detailed in the Operations Manual, including a notification time that allows the crew member to continue their rest when the delayed reporting procedure is activated.

In this case, the reporter was already enroute to the airport and therefore not in 'suitable accommodation.' At a safe and appropriate time, crewing must be informed of this so the report time can be adjusted accordingly. It is also important that the crew member communicates this information to the flight crew and SCCM, as their report time may differ from the rest of the team and this can impact FTLs. Delays are common in aviation and all crew members have a personal responsibility to ensure they are adequately rested for the maximum FDP assigned that day.

## CS FTL.1.205 Flight duty period (FDP)

### (d) Unforeseen circumstances in flight operations — delayed reporting

*(1) The operator may delay the reporting time in the event of unforeseen circumstances, if procedures for delayed reporting are established in the operations manual. The operator keeps records of delayed reporting. Delayed reporting procedures establish a notification time allowing a crew member to remain in his/her suitable accommodation when the delayed reporting procedure is activated.*

## Report No6 - CC6939 – Lack of Communication from Flight Crew during suspected Odour Event

### Initial Report

No communication from Flight crew during briefing or inflight to advise crew they were experiencing an Odour event in the cockpit and no check done in the cabin. The flight crew were aware that aircraft had a fume incident the night before but still agreed to take the aircraft up and back to {Airport} without telling any of us.

They then experienced smell of "sweaty socks" in the cockpit. Didn't check on our welfare; instead, they asked us to bring breakfast in thus knowingly exposing me to fumes without telling me then asked me to come back in and take breakfast trays out – exposing me to more fumes but not telling me. They said nothing about it on the turnaround. They said nothing about it when we landed. Then when we got on bus (remote stand) management phoned one of the crew to ask about their welfare after odour incident. Obviously we didn't know what they were talking about so phone is passed to SCCM who said they didn't know what was going on either, then the Captain spoke up and said yeah we didn't tell you "because in these situations if we say can you smell sweaty socks you are likely to say yes and then we aren't sure if that's true". So, they didn't tell us because they think we would have just agreed with them and not had our own opinions!

They are taken off the rest of their duty and sent home. We weren't and went on to {airport} and back. I came home with runny nose and headache. I complete a CSR – (cabin safety report) The whole day was worrying and stressed about what happened and how we were just carrying on regardless.

### Company Comment

Clear and effective communication is essential to ensure that Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are followed accurately and efficiently. Timely exchange of safety, operational, and customer service information between the Commander and the SCCM is critical. This information should also be shared with other crew members when operationally necessary to maintain situational awareness and ensure coordinated action.

In the reported incident, a crew member brought food trays into the flight deck, suggesting that the flight crew were not wearing oxygen masks at the time in order to eat, implying that the cockpit environment was considered safe. However, transient

smells can occur throughout a duty, with varying intensity depending on the phase of flight and location within the aircraft. Regardless of these variations, it is essential that trained procedures are followed, and that communication remains a constant foundation of flight safety.

Regarding the flight crew receiving a phone call, all crew members are reminded that they can contact the operations team at any point during the duty for advice or support. Welfare support can also be arranged when needed.

Finally, the completion of Cabin Safety Reports is a vital part of the safety management system. These reports help capture key learnings and support continuous improvement through a just culture.

### CAA Comment

Communication between flight crew and cabin crew is essential to facilitate shared situational awareness and assist in identifying the cause and extent of a potential occurrence. Questioning techniques and use of language are key elements of information acquisition skills and should consider whether individuals may be led to a conclusion rather than forming their own.

### CHIRP Comment

#### CHIRP Cabin Crew Advisory Board Comment

Odour events can be unsettling and it's completely understandable that crew would want clear, timely information.

In this case, it's evident the lack of communication led to confusion and concern. Cabin crew are part of the safety-critical team on board and should be informed of anything that may impact operations or wellbeing, even if it's just to maintain vigilance or monitor for symptoms.

The comment made about influencing perception, suggesting crew might "agree" they smell something if prompted is rooted in a valid human factors concept. Leading questions can indeed influence responses. However, this does not justify withholding information altogether. There are ways to manage communication sensitively, allowing crew to form their own opinions without suggestion.

#### CHIRP Flight Crew Comment

Open-ended, non-leading questions such as, "How's it going?" or "Noticed anything unusual?" should have been asked. It's essential to avoid leading questions, as they can influence responses and distort the sequence of events. Withholding information from the cabin crew is poor practice and compromises safety.

If a previous defect was identified and engineering cleared the aircraft for flight, we must trust the professional judgment of our colleagues in the engineering department. However, failing to involve the cabin crew in the process meant that a critical resource was overlooked.

## Report No7 - CC7032 – Flights to the Middle East

### Initial Report

Due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East I do not feel safe operating as crew this area. The decisions to fly are being made by 'security experts' but they are not the ones who are actually working these flights and having to stay in an unsafe country. It's in the news daily that missiles are being fired and my operator thinks it's acceptable to fly into such airports. I as crew do not feel safe and the company will investigate any crew who do not operate flights. We should be able to opt out of working these dangerous flights.

### Company Comment:

The safety and security of the airline is never compromised. Decisions about whether to operate flights to a particular destination are based on a wide range of factors. These include internal risk assessments as well as guidance from trusted external security partners and government bodies such as the Department for Transport (DfT).

It's understandable that when a situation is frequently covered in the media, it can influence public perception. However, security risks exist in many regions. Our destinations are continuously reviewed, and decisions are made using the most up-to-date and credible information available from both internal and external sources.

### Department for Transport (DfT) Comment

The DfT provide the conduit for airspace threat assessments based on various intelligence feeds, CHIRP reached out to the DfT and I have the following comment from them to share –

DfT is responsible for providing advice to UK registered aircraft operating in overseas airspace where there are risks linked to ongoing conflict. It is a host state responsibility to issue warnings of potential risks to civil aviation operations but, where this is not done, the UK will issue its own advice. This is done through issuing Notice to Airmen (NOTAMs). The UK follows a three-tiered approach to NOTAMs as follows:

Level 1 (Advisory) is the lowest level of advice and highlights concerns for airlines to consider in their own risk assessments.

Level 2 (Recommendation) recommends airlines do not operate either below a certain altitude, or at all, over specific airspace.

Level 3 (Legal Prohibition) the NOTAM is accompanied by a legal Direction under the Aviation Security Act to UK airlines, making it an offence to enter certain airspace.

DfT-issued NOTAMs only apply to UK airlines and UK registered aircraft and His Majesty's Government (HMG) has no ability to require airlines registered in other countries which may be carrying UK nationals to avoid using particular airspace.

Aside from a Level 3 NOTAM, which utilizes legal powers, it is ultimately down to individual airlines to decide if they will operate or not based on their own internal risk assessments, however going against formal HMG advice may impact on their liability and insurance should an incident occur.



Industry will (and do) take operational decisions on pausing flights where they judge the risk has reached their threshold. Different airlines have different thresholds. DfT remains in regular contact with UK airlines operating in the wider region. This includes: ongoing bilateral engagement with individual carriers on route-specific queries; bi-annual “all carriers” meetings on overflights risks (including a threat briefing at SECRET from UK intelligence partners); and ad hoc “all carriers” meetings in response to developing events (a crisis response mechanism). All of the major UK air carriers have security cleared staff within their security departments who are able to be briefed by appropriate HMG partners.

Internationally, DfT represents the UK in a number of expert forums including the Safer Skies Consultative Committee (SSCC) and the Expert Group on Risk Identification for Conflict Zones (EGRICZ) which bring together states-level experts in this area to develop best practice and guidance in this area; EGRICZ also has a coordination function in a crisis to try and align state responses where possible. DfT also works closely on a bilateral basis with key like-minded partners including the 5Eyes as well as France, Germany and EASA amongst others.

DfT assesses the level of threat to civil aviation in overseas airspace in line with ICAO guidance (Doc 10084, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, published October 2023). This is informed by information from the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) and Defence Intelligence on state-based capabilities. There is a rolling programme of assessments for those areas where DfT has existing airspace advice, ensuring advice does not remain in place when it is not required. For fast developing situations (e.g. Sudan, Israel/Hamas) DfT uses fast-time reporting from HMG

and open-sources to make an initial assessment of the situation and issue relevant advice which is then refined as more information and considered assessments become available.

### CHIRP Comment

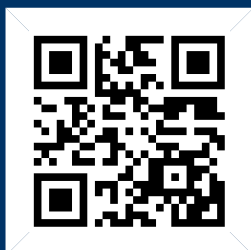
Given that conflict zones are regularly reported in the news, it's natural for crew to feel concerned, so it is important that operators communicate clearly with their crews regarding the processes and risk assessments in place. Equally important is for crew members to share their concerns with the management team and to consult official guidance rather than relying solely on news reports.

The safety concerns regarding flights operating in conflict zones has been raised by flight crew to CHIRP. That report can be read in [CHIRP in Air Transport FEEDBACK Edition 153](#). As advised in the Department for Transport (DfT) comment, intelligence assessment methods are coordinated between airlines, the DfT and the CAA to assess the risk at any given time. Additionally, the airline insurance industry monitors conflict risks on a daily basis, providing guidance to airlines on which airspace areas are deemed safe or restricted. In this regard, insurers tend to be particularly cautious and will advise companies on whether they can operate in specific airspace areas or not. Airlines will not take risks with their aircraft, crew, or passengers due to both safety and reputational concerns.

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