

# WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

*Posted on 13.12.2023 by Jennifer Curran*



**Category:** [Cabin Crew](#)

**Edition**CCFB 81

**Editorial**

## **Coping with disruptive PAX can be an increasing challenge**

The safety and security of an aircraft, its crew, and passengers must always be the priority and most flights operate without any issues with passengers who are enjoying the flight experience, or quietly going about their day. However, there are a small number of flights where this isn't the case, and where passengers' behaviour is not acceptable – this could be anything from them being verbally abusive to, in some cases, physical assault of fellow passenger or the operating cabin crew. Any behaviour of this kind is unacceptable whether this is in social or work situations; operators do have procedures in place to support crew in dealing with such situations on the day and afterwards.

Disruptive behaviour could be displayed for a variety of reasons e.g. delays, anxiety, intoxication,

medical conditions, mental health or drugs (prescription and illegal). Travelling through an airport is not the 'norm' for many people and this can become stressful for some. A person's actions are only "the tip of the iceberg"; beyond the surface, hidden causes of behaviour could be attributed to emotional, social, cultural, and other variables.

Preventing disruptive passenger incidents is always the best mitigation, but not always possible, particularly with less human contact prior to boarding than ever before – you as the operating cabin crew may be the first to notice any unusual behaviour or potential problems. Denying boarding to an intoxicated or unruly passenger is potentially a cabin crew's first option so it is important to take time during boarding to ensure that you are situationally aware, remember that greeting passengers is not just about saying hello, it is also an initial assessment of them. Are they fit to fly? Are they displaying unusual behaviour or showing signs of alcohol intoxication? Would you choose them as an ABP? These observations may help you spot the first signs of an issue prior to the flight getting airborne. Remember, if something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.

The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has defined a four tier threat level hierarchy. The ICAO level of threat ranges from verbal abuse (Level 1) through to attempted or actual breach of the flight crew compartment (Level 4). *For more information on ICAO threat levels please see report FC5275 below.* All operators train cabin crew de-escalation techniques as part of Aviation Security SEP training and often these techniques are the best tools to calm down a situation, or an individual. Situations inflight can be magnified, travelling at 35,000ft in a big tube packed with other people can test the patience of many, however the majority of these passengers will not become disruptive. Please take time to review your operators de-escalation techniques and take a few minutes to think, *what would I do if I was faced with an unruly passenger today?* What are the options available to you as cabin crew? In the event of a passenger showing signs of becoming disruptive perhaps changing the crew member that is dealing with the incident would help, sometimes a new face can reset the conversation. If alcohol is a factor, there are several techniques that can be implemented to prevent intoxication and the behaviour that brings, such as slowing down the service, making non-tolerance announcements, ensuring that all crew are aware of those showing signs of having had too much alcohol so that more isn't served etc. If appropriate, it may be worth sharing experiences and techniques during the briefing. For further strategies please click on this link [Even safer and more enjoyable air travel for all \(iata.org\)](https://www.iata.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/Pages/pr08-2019-01.aspx)

As mentioned above, disruptive behaviour from a passenger is unacceptable and unfortunately, despite attempting de-escalation techniques and a number of the suggestions already mentioned, some situations are unresolvable inflight and this can result in an aircraft diversion. The UK CAA state 'The punishment for disruption varies depending on the severity. Acts of drunkenness on an aircraft face a maximum fine of £5,000 and two years in prison. The prison sentence for endangering the safety of an aircraft is up to five years. Disruptive passengers may also be asked to reimburse the airline with the cost of the diversion. Diversion costs typically range from £10,000 –

£80,000 depending on the size of the aircraft and where it diverts to'. [Disruptive passengers | Civil Aviation Authority \(caa.co.uk\)](#)

Early this summer EASA launched the 2023 Fly Right Campaign and some airlines and airports are working together to identify and develop new strategies that can minimise the frequency of these occurrences [Unruly Passengers – Fly Right Campaign 2023 | EASA Community \(europa.eu\)](#)

Other than banning disruptive individuals, some operators will also initiate a prosecution. Please remember to make detailed notes of the incident, their description, behaviour and seat number (manifested seat, as often they can move around the cabin) along with names of witnesses (cabin crew and passengers). It is important that any instances of disruptive behaviour is reported via your company's internal reporting – just think the individual could have behaved like this on another flight and no one had reported it...

Stay safe,

## Jennifer Curran

*The topic of this editorial was chosen in response to CHIRP receiving a number of reports relating to disruptive passengers, not just from cabin crew but from flight crew as well. Two of these disidentified reports can be read in the reports section of this newsletter.*

### CHIRP cabin crew reports update

Report Update Cabin crew, primarily from UK operators, submit confidential safety-related reports on a variety of topics to CHIRP; key issues this year continue to be related to duty periods, fatigue and pressures/goals. CHIRP received 104 reports from cabin crew in the third quarter of 2023. The top-10 key issues from these reports are shown in the graphic.



### Comments on previous FEEDBACKS

Here at CHIRP we very much value your inputs and comments, positive or otherwise. 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).

We value your opinion about our FEEDBACK newsletters and associated engagement methods, please spend a few minutes responding to 10 short questions about CHIRP Aviation FEEDBACK

## CHIRP FEEDBACK Survey

We value your opinion about our FEEDBACK newsletters and associated engagement methods, please click on the hyperlink and spend a few minutes responding to [10 short questions about CHIRP Aviation FEEDBACK](#)



## 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 \(BHDV\)](#)



