

CC6405

Posted on 11.12.2023 by Jennifer Curran

Category: [Cabin Crew](#)

Report Title Alcohol; Airport consumption

Initial Report

This is a general report due to recent issues related to alcohol consumption. Irrelevant of how much money retail shops generate on alcohol there is no control on alcohol consumption at airports. This occurs when purchasing a bottle from a retail shop at duty-free or drinking alcohol at a bar/restaurant. If safety is our number why is this happening? Staff at airports should be implemented with passenger limitations on alcohol consumption as staff do not want any confrontation with traveling passengers however this falls on cabin crew during inflight. The main issue is not passengers who are intoxicated BUT passengers who are halfway to being intoxicated. During inflight we do not know how much alcohol was consumed before departure. Whilst I guarantee you that most flight attendants take all necessary steps during inflight we still face direct confrontation with passengers when we refuse to serve them more alcohol onboard. As you are aware some intoxicated passengers get aggressive, start to be loud or start interfering with other passengers around them or use abusive language in a flight where children are also present.

During a flight that occurred, I offloaded 3 passengers not because they were not fit for travel. They were being loud during boarding & acting in a childish manner 'disturbing the peace' let's say. Had I not intervened this situation would have escalated after take-off. Not knowing if I am permitted to do so as this is a grey area, I even confiscated their own alcohol as irrelevant of how many announcements or how many times you tell passengers they still would have consumed their own alcohol during the flight. Some passengers think it's like a cat & mouse game where I need to catch them out. Having so many years of experience, being loud (which is not a crime) & under the influence of alcohol, I've learned not to take any chances however we still indulge in stress and abuse from the offloaded passengers.

Comment

CHIRP Cabin Crew Advisory Board (CCAB) Comment CC6405 and FC5275:

CHIRP are increasingly receiving reports from both cabin crew and flight crew who are worried about the amount of alcohol that can be bought and consumed whilst in the airport terminal and during flights. Reports CC6405 and FC5275 highlight the concerns seen by the entire crew.

An individual's tolerance to alcohol is variable but the cabin environment with its reduced pressure and humidity can result in dehydration and mild hypoxia which, when combined with alcohol, can result in intoxication and this is frequently mentioned as one of the major contributing causal factors in disruptive passenger incidents. Whilst many airports and operators are promoting the [onetoomany](#) campaign advising passengers of the implication of being disruptive onboard, there are currently no licensing laws in UK airport terminals.

Some airlines have had discussions with the police and airport operators to ensure that the duty-free staff are aware of the consequences of passengers drinking airport bought beverages onboard and how to mitigate the situation, however it's often a crew member who spots the problem first. Many operators have adopted a zero tolerance PAs and also refuse to serve passengers more than a certain number of drinks each, the drink service can also be aborted if passengers prove to be unruly or intoxicated.

Regardless of whether alcohol is involved the Commander has the authority to off load passengers and the SCCM should liaise with the flight crew as soon as possible if a situation arises in the cabin. Please refer to the editorial for more information and advice.

CHIRP Air Transport Advisory Board (ATAB) Comment CC6405 and FC5275:

Disruptive passengers are a particular problem at the moment and are recognised as such by the industry and regulator; this matter has also been discussed by the *CHIRP* Cabin Crew Advisory Board (CCAB) who have published associated comments in Cabin Crew FEEDBACK Edition 81 offering practical advice about de-escalation but *CHIRP* agrees that more should be done to deny boarding of potentially disruptive passengers in the first place.

We note that the first reading of the '[Aviation Banning Orders \(Disruptive Passengers\)](#)' Bill recently occurred in Parliament (24th May 2023) and this is intended to give some legal basis for action. However, the second reading in Parliament is not due until 24th November 2023 and so, although a welcome initiative, this is not expected to provide any productive resolution this year.

Part of the problem is that responsibilities for action are not clear: ground staff often just want to get rid of the problem by getting passengers onto the aircraft; airport bars and pubs want to maximise profits; and cabin crew are then often left to deal with the problem. As the commander of the aircraft, captains have a responsibility to support overtly and visibly (when practical) their cabin crew in the handling of disruptive passengers, and airlines could also usefully collaborate with an exclusion list such that problem passengers identified by one airline are banned from all airlines.

Within Annex 17 'Aviation Security', ICAO defines a disruptive passenger as: *"A passenger who fails to respect the rules of conduct at an airport or on board an aircraft or to follow the instructions of the airport staff or crew members and thereby disturbs the good order and discipline at an airport or on board the aircraft."* ICAO also defines a hierarchy of 4 levels of disruptive behaviour as below, and the Skybrary article '[Unruly Passengers](#)' provides useful further material.

Legal action in respect of Level 3 and 4 is probably fairly straight-forward, but Level 1 and 2 transgressions are harder to deal with legally, and the threshold for when a Level 2 transgression becomes illegal under the Offences Against a Person Act 1861 is sometimes hard to determine. In regulatory terms, once the associated Aviation Banning Orders Bill mentioned above has passed through Parliament and become law, the acceptable level of evidence for legal action and bans should be clearer and more could probably be done in defining how to deal with such incidents, the powers of gate staff / cabin crew and the permitted levels of intoxication of passengers.

ICAO Hierarchy of Disruptive Behaviour

Level 1 – Disruptive Behaviour (verbal)

This can include: irrational or disorderly behaviour involving alcohol or drugs; abusive language; and defiant actions such as non-compliance with Crew Member commands.

Level 2 – Physically Abusive Behaviour

This can include: pushing; grabbing; hitting or kicking a cabin crew Member or another passenger; damage to aircraft equipment and systems; or damage to the personal effects of a Cabin Crew Member or another passenger.

Level 3 – Life Threatening Behaviour (or display of a weapon)

The involvement of a weapon in any passenger disturbance immediately increases the level of threat. A weapon is a means by which terrorists can rapidly achieve control of a large number of passengers and cabin crew by intimidation.

The threat of a concealed weapon, the display of a weapon and the use of a weapon are all life threatening scenarios. When there is a threat of a concealed weapon cabin crew should attempt by peaceful means to confirm the existence of the weapon. When a passenger's behaviour deliberately threatens life, with or without a weapon being displayed, then the cabin crew should assume that the action may escalate into an attempted hijack. Weapons include: guns; explosives; stun guns; knives, any item incorporating a sharp point or edge; and wires and cords etc.

Level 4 – Attempted or Actual Breach of the Flight Crew Compartment

The highest level of threat is an attempted or actual breach of the flight deck, whether intended, threatened or achieved. Hijackers may concentrate on violence or the threat of violence against cabin crew and passengers in order to gain access to the flight deck, rather than an initial attempt to breach the flight deck.

Any threat or attempt to gain access to the flight deck has one purpose, to gain control of the flying of the aircraft, which may include the possibility of using the aircraft as a weapon.



