

FC5255

Posted on 31.10.2023 by Steve Forward

Category: [Flight Crew \(Commercial\)](#)

Report Title Cumulative fatigue

Initial Report

I have been a Captain in this airline for many years and I am deeply concerned about the rising fatigue levels amongst my colleagues. This is coupled with a deafness and an attitude of denial by management, who seem unprepared to do anything to address it which may require a reduction in the flying programme and therefore loss of revenue. I have had several occasions during the previous year where I have taken in-seat rest during a long night flight home, opened my eyes during this period and found the First Officer fast asleep, or they have fallen asleep on me during a critical stage of flight. Many pilots are managing this by taking anything up to 3 hours 'in seat napping' which is far beyond what was ever envisaged or intended with 'controlled recovery rest', a practice to be used in extremis.

What concerns me more is that, as a result of demonstrated unfairness of the handling of many pilot's careers during the pandemic and their subsequent re-hiring, many of them are afraid to speak up or report fatigued for fear of not passing their command interview. The lack of feeling of security or trust is palpable. I feel that the understanding and respect for the challenges of our profession are virtually non-existent under the present management structure, and everything is geared towards working pilots into the ground and rolling the dice on safety.

I submit many fatigue reports with honest reporting on the level of fatigue I do or do not experience on a flight, but those which I have scored most harshly, along with my colleagues, have never changed. I have submitted many reports on poor or inadequate hotel accommodation (another area which has been targeted for aggressive savings) and these are completely ignored, despite the obvious impact they have on fitness to operate home. Coupled with a morale that frankly I have never known to be worse in all the years I have been here, I am concerned that our management are just walking us into a serious incident or worse. Their bonus-focussed culture promotes denial of any issue that may point back to decisions they have made earlier. We have had a few eras of challenging morale in the past, largely caused by a similarly aggressive management approach which was resolved by a change of faces at the top. But I have never known it to be as bad as this, and the career vulnerability that many people now feel after the deliberate attack on seniority during the pandemic, means many are terrified of speaking up or voicing their concerns, or calling fatigued. This is the area that concerns me the most.

Comment

This is one of those reports that we receive and which we cannot address with the company due to identifying aspects. Notwithstanding, we have shared the fuller report with the CAA and they have included it in their enhanced oversight activities. The CAA don't share specific information with us due to commercial sensitivities but confirm that they are in regular contact with the company to ensure that they are operating safely and appropriately.

The reporter's heartfelt comments chime with other similar reports not just from this company but also others operating in the UK. Whilst recognising the problem of 'fatigue-reporting fatigue' wherein people stop reporting because they don't feel listened to, we can only re-emphasise the need to continue reporting through the company systems where you feel able otherwise there is little prospect of changes being made without a weight of data to indicate trends and issues. Although the reporter comments that little changes as a result, it certainly won't if no reports are made and, at some point, CAA scrutiny of company processes and statistics will come to bear. Perhaps the biggest concern in all of this is the perceived lack of trust between crews and management, which is the bedrock of Just Culture reporting. The pursuit of safety is a shared endeavour between management, crews and back-office staff at all levels; if these actors are not pulling together then safety can only suffer in the relentless drive for efficiency and productivity.



