

# CHIRP FEEDBACK

Issue No: 75

Summer 2005

## EDITORIAL

### LEVEL BUSTS - STILL INCREASING

In spite of initiatives aimed at reducing the number of level bust incidents, the number of reported events in the UK has continued to increase significantly.

NATS data, based on reports filed by ATCOs under the Mandatory Occurrence Reporting Scheme show that the cumulative total for the period Jan - Apr 2005 (116) is 33% higher than the same period in 2004. Moreover, research by NATS indicates that many similar incidents are not formally reported.

Two reports in this issue (see Page 4) are examples of the most common group of level bust incidents (24%), in which a crew has correctly read back an ATC clearance but then has failed to execute it.

NATS is leading a campaign to reduce significantly these occurrences and CAA (SRG) has recently updated the advice to operators/flight crew on operational best practice relevant to level bust prevention. FODCOM 13/2005 is available at <http://www.caa.co.uk/publications>

### ATC "STOP" INSTRUCTION - AN UPDATE

Following the publication of the item 'ATC Stop Instruction' in FEEDBACK Issue 73 the issue was raised with CAA (SRG) Air Traffic Services Standards Department. Subsequently, similar concerns regarding the possible deleterious effect that such an ATC call might have on flight deck operations at a critical time during take-off were expressed at a meeting of the UK Flight Safety Committee, following a further incident similar to that previously reported to CHIRP, this time involving a high speed rejected take off.

A joint CAA/BALPA/CHIRP/UKFSC working group, comprising flight crew and ATC specialists was established with the objective of defining "best practice" advice for ATCOs and flight crew.

The recommendations of the working group are being reviewed by CAA (SRG); it is anticipated that these will be published in the next few weeks.

### Number of Reports Received Since the Last Issue:

ATC - 5

#### Report Topics Have Included:

- Callsign Confusion - A Possible Remedy?
- A Decline in R/T Standards?
- Computer Upgrade Procedure
- Close Encounter in Class G Airspace

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### Flight Crew - 36

#### Report Topics Have Included:

- Management of Minimum Res
- Sickness Management Policies
- TCAS/Transponder Terminology
- ATC - RT Congestion, Wx Avoidance, ILS vectoring

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### Engineering - 5

#### Report Topics Have Included:

- Performing A Checks on the Line
- Acceptance of Security IDs at UK Airports
- Dangers of Loose Articles
- "For Info" Technical Log Entries

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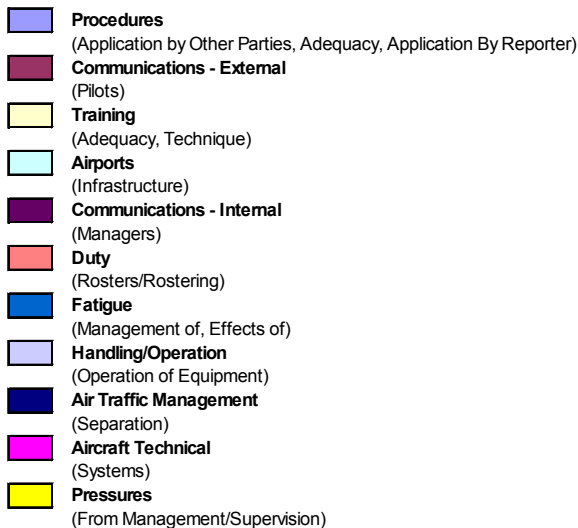
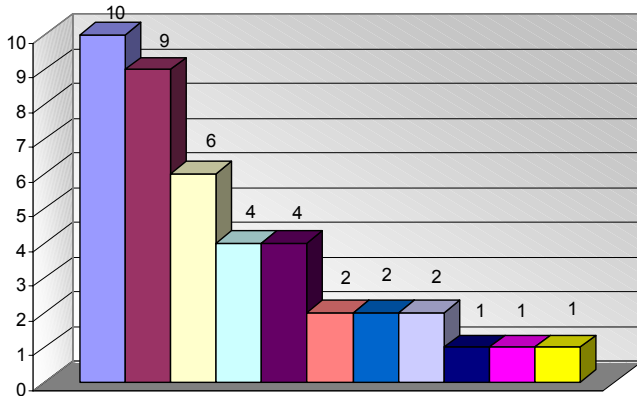
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An Air Transport Safety Newsletter

from **CHIRP** the Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme

# ATC REPORTS

Most Frequent ATC Issues Received:  
July 04 - June 05



## ELECTRONIC FLIGHT PROGRESS STRIPS

**Report Text:** This Unit recently introduced EFPS (Electronic Flight Progress Strips). It is a Canadian designed, windows-based computer system that processes and displays data from NAS (the NATS flight plan system); IFPS (flow control messages) SMS (airport stand allocation) and, in the future, ARINC (datalink clearance delivery).

The data displayed mimics the traditional strip display familiar to all ATCOs, and has great potential as part of a national system able to transmit data promptly between aerodrome, approach and area units, reducing co-ordination and allowing data analysis and incident investigation.

The EFPS system was introduced without operational trials and was not evaluated against other systems. Watch-keeping staff had only limited simulator training and many procedures had to be adapted to

suit EFPS. There are many significant safety concerns including:

- Strip data is inconsistent - position of items changes when strip is moved.
- Movement of strips varies according to position, there are four distinct methods which can lead to loss of data if confused.
- A strip 'bay' will suppress data if full. It is possible to lose strips in critical positions.
- 'Pop-up' menus are frequently used for data entry, and always obscure strip display.

Of vital importance is the fact that the workload is undeniably increased, and controllers are spending much more time 'eyes down' in the system, precluding a good look-out.

Since introduction of EFPS, there has been no comparative evaluation of the system and no investigation into the changes of working practices. It is, in effect, a closed issue, and the system is scheduled to be introduced at other Units.

I have found that I am making more 'minor' errors, and have to spend more 'thinking time' correcting them.

A proper independent evaluation of EFPS should take place, with input from operational controllers, before the system is put to wider use.

**CHIRP Comment:** The reporter's concerns were passed to NATS, who provided a comprehensive response. In summary, the EFPS project commenced in 1997; the system selected and subsequently introduced is that used at Toronto and nine other Canadian airports. An EFPS user group, which included controllers from three London airports, provided inputs for two years during the development of the UK system and further changes were made as a result of user feedback during training and advice from Human Factors specialists.

Throughout the extended period of controller training, controllers have been encouraged to report errors and design faults through open reporting and HF feedback forms; these have resulted in a number of further changes.

With respect to the reporter's specific points,

- The user group agreed the data to be displayed on each strip to ensure the essential information was highlighted and superfluous information hidden (but retrievable). This may give the impression that strips are inconsistent but it does ensure that important information is made highly visible.
- The movement of strips is largely by means of one control to forward strips to the next panel or position, only in the runway bay or where there is a choice of panels is there a 'pick and drop' action required to prevent inadvertent transfer. Retrieve and transfer functions have been

provided to resolve errors or deal with more unusual situations.

- c) Users are instructed to size windows such that active strips are fully visible. Scrolling to view other strips should normally only be required in pending (inactive) arrivals or departures due to the number of flight plans available in the system.
- d) Pop-up menus are provided to change or input data, but are initiated by the user not automatically.

As a result of further feedback from users, a number of improvements have been made since EFPS entered operational service, and a follow-up survey by Human Factors specialists is being conducted to identify any trends and common threads caused by human error. Following the recent implementation of the system at a second ATSU, there will be a further review of operating procedures and standards by the user group.

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### RUNWAY INCURSION PREVENTION

**Report Text:** There has been a number of incidents with one particular runway entry point on Runway ##L and two on Runway ##R at this airfield. One solution was to put barriers in place when it was the departure runway; however, several of my colleagues and I have argued that it is irrelevant what the runway is being used for, as we doubt that this fact alone would prevent pilots making a wrong turn onto what is an active runway.

The current solution is the phrase 'Runway Ahead' painted in white letters on a red background on the taxiway before the CATIII holds at these runway entry points. Coincidentally, I saw the same markings at a European airport only last week; however, in that case the airport has the markings at ALL runway entry points.

We have been advised that the 'Runway Ahead' markings are only a temporary measure here, as it is felt that the incursions were caused by problems with signage removal due to Work In Progress. However, I feel that they would be invaluable at all the runway entry points. One of my colleagues has e-mailed the Head of Safety in ATC Ops to request consideration for their permanent placement at all runway entry points.

**CHIRP Comment:** This matter was raised with CAA (SRG) Aerodrome Standards Department, who provided the following response:

There are currently no international standards for the application, location and characteristics of 'Runway Ahead' markings; the UK has made representation at ICAO to consider and develop the necessary provisions. The CAA considers it inappropriate to issue instructions

for the implementation of such markings in full until the specifications are agreed.

The provision of 'Runway Ahead' markings is currently the responsibility of individual airport authorities and the CAA supports the principle of 'Runway Ahead' markings if proposed by airport runway safety teams. In the case of the airport referenced in this report, following a review by the local runway safety team the markings have been introduced at those runway entry points where the layout has been considered to be a causal factor in incursions, some of which have been associated with work-in-progress. The team considered that to have markings at every entry point might reduce their impact. The markings are temporary; a decision as to their longevity will be made when the works have been completed.

As a result of similar runway incursion issues, a trial of 'Runway Ahead' markings is currently being undertaken at a major UK regional airport. Although considered useful, operational and maintenance issues have occurred and are being addressed.

From the **CHIRP** Advisory Board discussions, it is clear that from both a flight deck and an operational ATC perspective, the availability of Runway Ahead markings would appear to offer a potential safety benefit as an additional attention-getter in preventing an inadvertent incursion onto an active runway.

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### DECLINING R/T STANDARDS

**Report Text:** Some of my colleagues and I have noticed that in the past 6 months R/T standards at AAA (major UK airport) have been declining. Whilst we as ATCOs are certainly not blameless, it is surprising to find that the UK based airlines are getting particularly poor. There is currently a European-wide programme to prevent runway incursions; this is also pertinent here as the number of runway incursions has been on the increase. Whilst R/T has not been the primary cause in all of these incursions, it has been noted in many of the incident reports that the R/T could be improved on both the ATCO and Pilots' side.

Two recent examples of poor R/T follow; both of these were the replies when an aircraft had been given clearance to enter an active runway:

The first was given to a long-haul crew of a major UK operator. I instructed the pilot to follow his company aircraft across runway ##. The reply was "Roger". As there was neither any attempt to read back any part of my clearance, something which is mandatory in the UK, nor any callsign associated with this reply, I asked for a readback. The readback was preceded with a long sigh then read with a definite tone in the voice. Whilst I appreciate that the pilot had been flying for around 10 hours there is simply no excuse for poor R/T at any stage of the flight, particularly when crossing an active runway.

The second example was from a fellow controller. A short-haul crew from a major UK operator was given a conditional line-up for the departure runway. The reply was "after the ### (company) 320 goes, it's our turn", no mention of a runway and I do not remember seeing "when he goes, it's our turn" in any R/T manual I have ever read.

This trend is worrying, however there are also faults on the ATCO side and I am not sure if this may be a cause of the increase (in runway incursions). With all airports getting busier there is less opportunity to be verbose on the R/T and it is increasingly important that proper R/T be used.

**CHIRP Comment:** Poor R/T discipline has been identified in the CAA (SRG) 2005 Safety Plan and ways of improving the standard are currently under consideration. Communication error has also been identified as one of the principal contributors to ATC incidents and RTF congestion, as ATCOs are required to correct an incorrectly phrased read back.

It is interesting to note that whereas a majority of ATCOs are evaluated at least twice a year on a random basis and debriefed on the quality of their R/T phraseology, no comparable evaluation exists for many pilots throughout their entire flying career.

One flight deck R/T call that is most frequently incorrect as to content is that made on initial departure (Call sign; SID designator if appropriate; current or passing ALT/FL; PLUS Cleared ALT/FL - for SIDs involving stepped climb profiles, this is the initial ALT/FL). A second is that when checking in on a new frequency. Have you checked recently what phraseology is currently required? If not, why not review CAP 413 - Radiotelephony Manual - Fifteenth Edition? This can be accessed on the CAA web site.

- Duty**  
(Rosters/Rostering, Length, Rest)
- Procedures**  
(Application by Other Parties, Application by Reporter, Adequacy)
- Communications - External**  
(Service Providers)
- Company Policies**  
(Absence, Operational)
- Regulation/Law**  
(Compliance with)
- Pressures**  
(From Management/Supervision, Time, Commercial)
- Aircraft Technical**  
(Systems, Propulsion)
- Fatigue**  
(Effects of, Management of)
- Communications - Internal**  
(Managers, Crew)
- Handling/Operation**  
(Operation of Equipment, Aircraft Handling by Crew, Airmanship)

## ATIS CHANGES

**Report Text:** This is not a report of a single incident, but an observation of a situation, which happens frequently every working day and which, in my view, reduces safety margins at a critical phase of flight.

Wherever an airport has an ATIS, it is normal for arriving aircraft to announce - usually to the "Radar" controller - the ATIS broadcast designator which the crew have heard (e.g "Whiskey"), to indicate that they are aware of the Met conditions. In many cases this may not be the very latest ATIS broadcast, as they are updated every 30 minutes or less even if nothing has changed. If there has been no significant change in the weather since the broadcast heard by the pilot, the best controllers will either say nothing, or respond, "The ATIS is now X-Ray, no significant change". If there has been a change they will respond (for example) "The ATIS is now X-Ray, the QNH is now 1015".

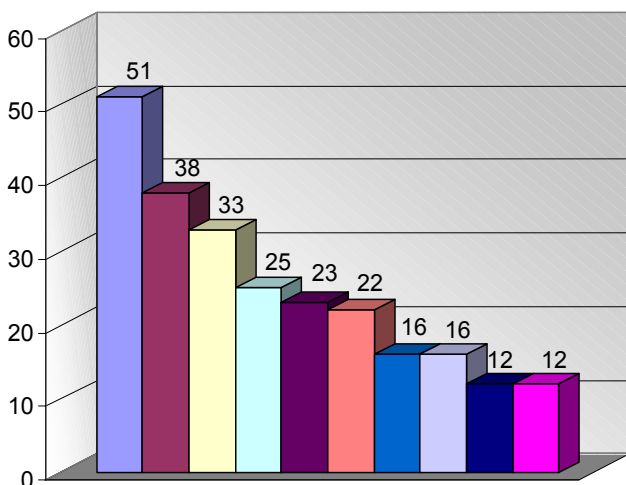
However, other controllers will respond "The ATIS is now X-Ray". This is entirely unhelpful, as it means that the pilot either has to ask "Is there any significant change from Whiskey?" and wait for the controller's response, or has to leave the frequency - often in the initial approach phase when it is important for both pilots to be "in the loop" - in order to listen to 'X-Ray'. For maximum safety and minimum transmissions - often on busy frequencies - it would be very helpful if there was more standardisation amongst controllers so that they tell the pilot what he needs to know in the first instance.

**CHIRP Comment:** Whereas in most situations the manual method of updating ATIS broadcasts by recording the new message enabled controllers to be aware of the relevant changes, in the case of the automated ATIS broadcasts this is no longer the case, except where the QNH changes.

The automated ATIS message is changed when pre-determined variances are triggered; these changes include both weather and airfield related items. Consequently, Approach/Radar controllers may not be aware of changes other than the QNH, particularly

## FLIGHT CREW REPORTS

**Most Frequent Flight Crew Issues Received:  
July 04 - June 05**



when, as in the case of the London TMA, the Approach controllers are located in Terminal Control and not the relevant tower.

Some controllers use the phrase "No significant change in the weather", but pilots should be aware that this statement should not be taken to imply that there are no significant changes at all.

As the reporter notes, it would be helpful if ATSUs were able to develop a 'best practice' policy for dealing with automated ATIS changes.

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### LEVEL BUSTS - AN INCREASING PROBLEM

**CHIRP** Narrative: Investigations into level busts and evidence from Line Operations Safety Audits (LOSAs) show that, for whatever reason, SOPs specifically designed to ensure that altimeters/altitudes are set correctly are not followed. The following reports are good examples of how easily a minor procedural change/distraction can trap the unwary.

(1)

**Report Text:** Following the highlighting of level busts by the UK CAA in recent years I would like to add my recent experience which highlights just one way in which a level bust can occur.

Whilst in this case there was no subsequent AIRPROX, an MOR was filed and one's pride took a personal dent. This is how I saw the incident.

Climbing out of major German airport with thunderstorm on the SID route, we required an approved 30 degree heading deviation off the SID track to avoid weather and were cleared to climb FL 110. At about FLO90, we were instructed to stop climb at FL 100. This was set, however, I was just momentarily (and that's all it seemed) preoccupied with weather returns on the radar and did not monitor for automatic level capture. At FL 102 I recognized that the autopilot had not engaged Altitude Capture. Realising the bust, I disconnected the autopilot and smoothly returned the aircraft back to FL 100 having attained FL 105 in the recovery.

During the recovery I was about to tell ATC when they called us; we apologized and ATC also apologized, I think because of the late change in instructing us to stop climb FL100. There seemed to be no confliction problem this time, and nothing was seen on TCAS; we believe we responded pretty quickly to contain the bust to 500 feet.

There were three pilots (heavy crew) on the flight deck and all three pilots called the bust pretty much simultaneously at about FL102; it took a further 300 ft to recover.

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(2)

**Report Text:** Early morning ferry. New procedures mean we now set the MCP (Mode Control Panel) height to 9,900ft until we receive the ATC clearance.

The F/O went to set a height saying "setting 5,000" then corrected himself and set the Company height 9,900ft.

We then received our ATC Standard Instrument Departure (SID) clearance and I set 5,000ft on the MCP. I later briefed for the departure and gave the stop height as 5,000ft. Actual stop height was 4,000ft, which I subsequently flew through. ATC advised us and resolved the situation by clearing us to 5,000ft. I do not wish to absolve my error but the following are worth considering.

The SID plates used by my company are poor at showing stop heights and I believe they need highlighting. Also ferry flights require the pilots to complete a full security check of the whole aircraft, which makes it tight to get away on time.

**CHIRP** Comment: As noted in the Editorial on Page 1, we know the most frequent cause of level busts but not why this type of error continues to occur in significant numbers. Reports such as those above are extremely valuable in that they give an insight into the principal and contributory causal factors. In both cases, whilst the weather radar distraction/time pressure were contributory factors, an effective cross-check of the autopilot mode engagement and the SID altitude would have prevented the errors. What are the other errors/omissions/system deficiencies that contribute to this group? Have you been caught out recently or had a close call? If so, why did it happen and what helped you to recover the situation? We would be most interested to know.

In relation to SID stop heights, as a result of similar incidents NATS has raised the issue of improving the clarity of this information with a major chart supplier; however, no change has been agreed as yet.

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### ACAS vs ATC - A REMINDER

**Report Text:** We were just innocent bystanders who heard the following RT exchange between a Northern European air traffic controller and an aircraft of a third nationality, which was cruising at FL380.

ATC: "[Callsign] contact AAA on channel XXX.XXX."

Aircraft: "AAA on XXX.XXX. [Callsign]."

ATC: "Negative! [Callsign] descend immediately FL370."

Aircraft: "Roger. Descending FL370. [Callsign]".

ATC: "The traffic is in your twelve o'clock at 12 miles at your level, converging. He will maintain FL380. If you get an ACAS alert, do not follow it."

Aircraft: Silence.

We were aware of no exchange with the other aircraft involved, but there was a lot of chatter in the National language on the RT.

I just hope that the pilots would have obeyed any TCAS RAs and ignored the controller's incorrect instruction. I also hope that the controller went home and re-read his manuals!

**CHIRP** Comment: Following the Überlingen mid-air collision, ICAO issued revised guidance regarding TCAS RAs; this was reflected in FODCOM 27/2003 issued by CAA (SRG). The revised guidance is unequivocal and states that in the event of an RA pilots shall:

- respond immediately by following the RA as indicated, unless doing so would jeopardize the safety of the aeroplane;
- follow the RA even if there is a conflict between the RA and an ATC instruction to manoeuvre;
- not manoeuvre in the opposite sense to an RA;
- As soon as possible, as permitted by flight crew workload, notify the appropriate ATC unit of the RA including the direction of deviation;

Since the revised guidance was issued, at least one further serious loss of separation incident has occurred in Europe, in which a crew continued to follow an ATC instruction and did not respond immediately to the RA that they received.

In the UK, the importance of flight crew responding immediately to a RA has been emphasised to ATC providers in Air Traffic Services Information Notice (ATSIN) No.15.

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### RUNWAY CROSSING PROCEDURES

**Report Text:** Due to work in progress at ### (Mid-Atlantic airport) it was necessary to cross the active runway to get to the holding point.

Initial taxi instructions were to a holding point short of the active runway to await crossing instructions. Holding short, we queried if we should switch to Tower frequency but told to stay on Ground frequency. We were eventually given crossing instructions by the Ground controller and started to move forward but noticed that an aircraft lined up on the runway had begun its take off roll. We stopped at the same time as the aircraft on the runway aborted its take-off.

It is common practice that only one frequency and one controller should be used to control activity around the active runway. ### thinks differently.

**CHIRP** Comment: ICAO Doc.4444 - Air Traffic Management (PANS-ATM) states as follows:

".....Where control of taxiing aircraft is provided by a ground controller and the control of runway operations by an aerodrome controller, the use of the runway by a taxiing aircraft shall be co-ordinated with and approved

by the aerodrome controller. Communication with the aircraft concerned should be transferred from the ground controller to the aerodrome controller prior to the aircraft entering the runway."

In a recent runway incursion incident at a UK airport, the fact that both aircraft involved were on the Tower frequency was probably the most important contributory factor in avoiding a more serious incident. In relation to the ICAO guidance, it is worth noting that whereas co-ordination with the aerodrome controller is mandatory, ICAO only recommends transfer to the aerodrome controller prior to entering the runway.

Details of this particular incident have been passed to CAA International Services, with a request that it be raised with the relevant National Aviation Authority.

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### ALL CHANGE BUT BE CAREFUL

**Report Text:** Our fleet is changing the EFIS primary flight displays to incorporate "speed tapes" and other enhancements to the Primary Flight Display (PFD) and Multi-functional Display (MFD) - in NAV mode.

This is coincident in time with a significant *ab initio* pilot training programme with consequent system overload. After two sectors of a six-sector line-training day immediately following two early training days, I was requested at short notice (passengers already boarding our aircraft) to swap to another aircraft as my F/O was (although still in line-training) familiar with the alternate symbology and the designated crew was not.

The passengers were already on board as we manned the flight deck. We said, "Lets not rush" but - also due to lack of rigour in our checklists and procedures - managed to get airborne bugged-up for speeds at one tonne lighter than the aircraft was.

We only discovered this error when bugging-up for the subsequent landing. No damage on this occasion except to pride, but what if???

**CHIRP** Comment: This report highlights the importance of adhering to SOPs particularly when circumstances combine to place additional pressures on a crew. The reporter is to be congratulated on reporting his error for the benefit of others.

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### LACK OF FEEDBACK

**Report Text:** Regarding the report 'TCAS RA incident' in Issue 73, the writer comments, "Interestingly no-one has contacted me regarding this incident despite raising an ASR and MOR."

Is this a sign of the times? In our company we are told that "they" get too many company reports to reply to them. We just have to trust etc.

There was a time when a manager would simply write a note at the bottom of the report, pass it on to his secretary to be typed and hand it back for review and signature.

The lack of courtesy leaves crews feeling that management, CAA et al do not feel we deserve better.

**CHIRP** Comment: The UK CAA Mandatory Occurrence Reporting (MOR) scheme is by some margin the largest reporting system of its kind in Europe and currently receives in the order of 11,000 reports per annum; this number precludes an individual response.

A number of operators provide some form of acknowledgement for ASRs/MORs submitted through company schemes, as part of their Safety Management System. If your company does not provide acknowledgement/feedback, the option is available for you to contact CAA (SRG) directly to enquire as to what action has been taken in response to a specific report.

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#### MORE ON THE USE OF MOBILE TELEPHONES

**CHIRP** Narrative: Following the publication of the report on the use of mobile telephones in the last issue (FEEDBACK 74 - Pages 8/9), several queries were received regarding the **CHIRP** response. The following is typical:

**Report Text:** I believe that the CHIRP Comments in CABIN CREW FEEDBACK 15 and FEEDBACK 74 are incorrect in that AIC (Pink 1/2004) is no longer current. My company's policy is that so long as the phone has a "flight safe" mode and that this is selected prior to take off then this is allowed.

I am aware of a number of incidents with cabin crews arguing with passengers about this and if the CHIRP comment is in error a correction should be published, to help avoid any further confusion.

**CHIRP** Comment: AIC (Pink 1/2004) remains extant. The comment published in CCFB 15 and FB 74 referred to intentionally transmitting Portable Electronic Devices (these include most mobile telephones) and reflected accurately the AIC text related to these devices.

At the time the previous comment was written, neither the CHIRP Advisory Board nor the CHIRP staff was aware that any UK operator had elected to alleviate the restriction in respect of new generation cell phones with a 'Flight' or 'Safe' mode. With respect to these particular devices, the AIC (Para 2.2.4) devolves the responsibility to the operator for ensuring that the use of such a device in a non-transmitting 'Flight' or 'Safe' mode does not pose any interference risk and that controls are in place to ensure that the device is not transmitting. The Note to Para 2.2.4 of the AIC requires the operator to provide clear instructions to flight crew and cabin

crew to enable them to distinguish between those devices that are acceptable and those that are not, to determine that such devices are being operated in the 'Safe' mode and to ensure that the 'Safe' mode is preventing the device from transmitting.

Other reports received on this topic suggest that the mode of operation of some of these new generation devices cannot be readily determined.

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#### PA OVERLOAD - A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE?

**Report Text:** I was initially tempted to let this incident pass without comment but a subsequent flight where I was again subjected to a barrage of 'sales' PAs prompted me to write this.

Question: Does the constant audio litany of sales offers by some carriers cause passengers to switch off and not listen even when more serious PA announcements are made?

Answer: Yes - for the following reason.

I am a flight deck crew member and was returning from a weekend break with my wife.

It was an early afternoon flight that was slightly delayed due to maintenance. The aircraft was eventually towed onto stand and the pax boarded whilst the engineer outside replaced an engine fairing.

During boarding the cabin crew twice PA'd a welcome, apologised for a short maintenance delay and offered us the opportunity to purchase scratch cards. Those on board tended to ignore the PA and continue to chat or read. When all were on board the Captain made a PA (at a low volume) apologising for the delay, gave us a few details about the trip and asked us to pay attention to the safety brief. The safety brief was preceded by an announcement that the cabin crew would be distributing the in-flight magazine containing a wealth of gift items for purchase and scratch cards would be on sale soon too. Aircraft pushed back, safety brief commenced, most people continued to chat or read and some revellers in the rear continued to make a noise. With the safety brief over, the in-flight magazine was distributed for those that wanted it. Aircraft commenced it's take off.

At the point of rotation (aircraft still on the ground but starting to pitch up) the aircraft lurched quite markedly to the left causing a few gasps and yelps of surprise amongst some pax; I thought we'd been hit by a sudden strong cross-wind gust. Aircraft became airborne, gear retracted and all seemed to be a normal departure as we turned left and headed off towards AAA. During the climb the cabin crew broadcast a PA about the imminent scratch card sale, what we could win, and then they walked the length of the cabin offering them for purchase. Scratch-card sale over, we then had another PA informing us that snacks and drinks would shortly be

offered for sale along with the range of gift items from the magazine. As we levelled into the short cruise there were several visits to the flight deck by one cabin crew member. Shortly after crossing the UK coast the aircraft started to slow down and descend.

The next PA was from the flight deck and was again quite low in volume. The Captain was back on announcing the weather at our destination, the expected arrival time and a couple of features visible from the left hand side of the aircraft. Again most people were reading, chatting or, in the case of the revellers, who had bought some beer, being noisy but still in good spirits. Most (including my wife) were not listening to the Captain's PA which had by this stage been going for a minute or so. The Captain then proceeded to quietly inform us; "Oh by the way, some of you may have noticed a roll on take off, we may have a problem with the aircraft so just as a precaution we are going to prepare the cabin for an emergency landing."

The cabin crew members gathered in a huddle at the front galley, had a quick discussion amongst themselves and then took their positions for the emergency landing brief.

The brief was delivered in a high pitched panicky voice at a pace that would have impressed Michael Schumacher. One quick bob down with her hands behind her head from the girl in the aisle next to me (I presume she was demonstrating the brace position) and it was all over. Were we told that we had to brace or just when we heard the call (at low volume) from the flight deck? Did she mention to expect more than one shock/impact? It all came out so quick that I was unsure, as were many other pax. However, there were still a significant number blissfully unaware that anything out of the ordinary was going on.

The cabin crew then hurriedly secured the cabin, checked that seat belts were fastened and one shouted at the revellers who were up and moving about. The cabin crew were also looking genuinely frightened and nervous (and very young) and didn't instil much confidence for the impending emergency.

Aircraft descended, slowed quite early and the gear was lowered early; various stages of flap and slat were extended and we were on the approach into AAA. No further PAs had been made. Short finals, do we brace or not? I confess that I didn't, as I presumed that if we did have a problem, we would have been told but some pax did (others continued to read or chat). Aircraft touched down normally and taxied onto the stand followed by emergency vehicles.

The next PA (low volume) came from the Captain, welcoming us to AAA and apologising for the emergency preparation and saying, "Better safe than sorry." This was swiftly followed by the cabin crew PA thanking us for choosing ###, telling us that they

enjoyed looking after us and they looked forward to seeing us again. After a brief pause the PA continued, telling us we could get a good deal with a car hire company if we showed our boarding card, inviting us to inquire about hotel partners for further good deals and also there was some mention of bus tickets for sale.

In the baggage hall, one woman was openly crying, some people were excitedly talking about the incident, some seemed unaware that anything untoward had happened and as for the stag weekenders, they were making the most of the last few minutes of their party.

In summary, I appreciate that airlines have to make a profit and need to find various ways of extracting cash from their customers but the constant bombardment of PA's does cause people to 'switch off' and not listen. Had it all gone wrong that day and we did thump and skid across the airfield, there would have been a significant number of pax who were not prepared for it.

As I mentioned at the beginning, I was prompted to write this after another ### flight last week where, once again, we were bombarded with continuous sales PAs. Surprise, surprise, nobody was listening!

**CHIRP Comment: The flight deck and cabin crew procedures, as reported, would not accord with UK best practice. Many airlines ensure that the pre-flight safety briefing is delivered separately from any other passenger PA announcement to highlight the importance of the information. Also, if PA briefings from the flight deck are not clearly audible, particularly in a precautionary/emergency situation, the flight deck should be advised and the defect reported in the Technical Log.**

The reporter's comments have been represented to the relevant National Aviation Authority.

## CABIN CREW REPORTS

**CHIRP Narrative: The introduction of the locked flight deck door policy necessitated changes to flight crew/cabin crew communication procedures. These two cabin crew reports describe situations that can occur if 'best practice' is not followed:**

### FLIGHT DECK CHECKS

**Report Text:** After take-off I called the flight crew as part of my normal check. I received no answer to my call. I waited approx one minute, still no response, I called again. Still NO response. I waited a further minute and as three-four minutes had passed with no response I started to worry.

I tried to enter the flight deck using the normal method for requesting access and again, no response and the door did not open. I consulted with

a colleague who agreed that this was very worrying and not the norm.

I again tried the normal method for requesting access again and the door was opened. I entered the flight deck rather relieved only to be greeted by a tirade from the Captain. He appeared very agitated over my persistent attempts to contact the flight deck and shouted at me saying they were very busy and I should wait for them to contact me. I tried to explain that I understood this, however, it was the SOP to check on the flight crew and 5 minutes was a long time to receive no response. (It was not at a 'critical' stage of flight.) I also tried to explain that in my experience the flight crew would ask me to 'standby' on the interphone, and call me back within a minute or so, or on entry to the flight deck I would be instructed to wait with an open hand gesture. The Captain remained aggressive and refused to accept this as the norm.

We had NO further communication from the flight crew apart from the '10 minute to landing call'.

**CHIRP Comment:** An interruption in the form of a call from the cabin can be irritating if it occurs in the middle of a briefing or at a particularly busy time. To avoid a significant delay in responding, as described in this report, a number of operators have introduced the phrase "Standby" as a formal flight deck response to indicate that flight crew members are temporarily pre-occupied with other tasks.

Many company cabin crew SOPs include detailed procedures to meet the requirement for to maintain 'regular contact' with the flight deck. Discouraging communication between the cabin and the flight deck could result in important information not being passed in a non-normal situation.

### LACK OF BRIEFING

**Report Text:** Shortly after departing from the UK on a long-haul sector, the Captain made an alert call for the In Charge cabin crew member. The briefing was that the undercarriage had failed to retract, the aircraft was continuing to destination (USA), and Engineering was advising flight deck on alternatives to attain retraction. Fifteen minutes later, the cabin crew were informed that undercarriage had retracted - flight continued.

On descent into US, several crew voiced their concern that for the duration of the flight no one had received any communication from the In Charge/flight deck that all was OK for landing - i.e. if u/carriage would come down for landing.

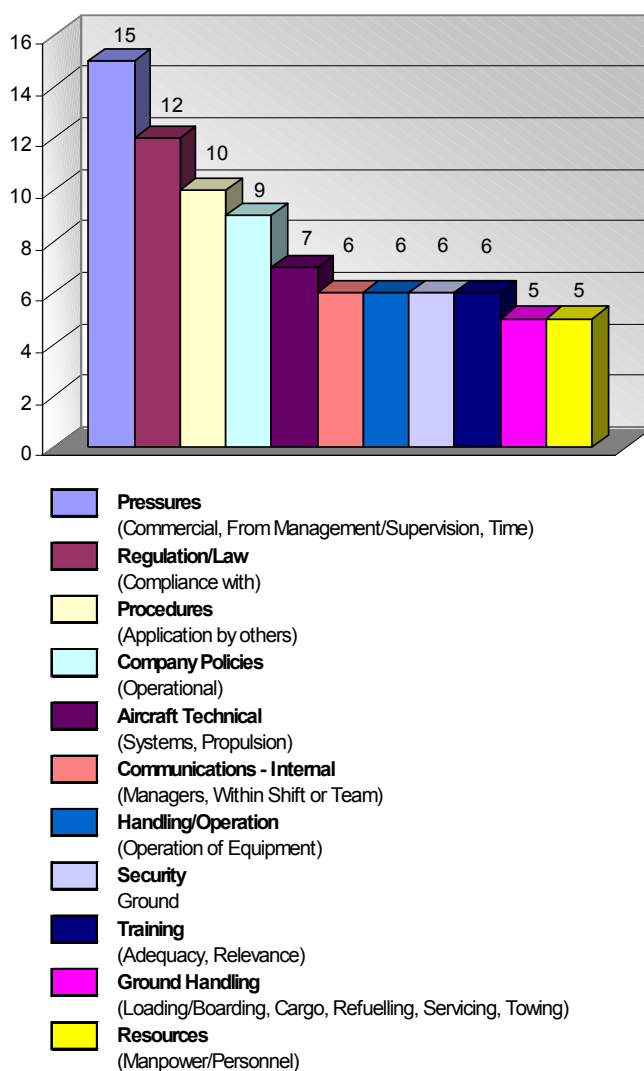
I and other senior crew repeatedly asked the In Charge for an update but none was given. We landed with no problems - albeit a rather nervous landing for crew. On the crew bus we waited for an explanation/debrief from In Charge/flight crew who got on the bus with no word/acknowledgement at all.

**CHIRP Comment:** Subsequent CHIRP discussions with the Engineering Department of the operator concerned confirmed that the nature of the problem was such that the aircraft was not at risk.

However, the report provides a useful reminder that cabin crew members' knowledge of aircraft systems is often very limited and an update on the situation when time permits is good CRM and should alleviate any lingering concerns.

## ENGINEER REPORTS

Most Frequent Engineering Issues Received:  
July 04 - June 05



### THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE?

**Report Text:** I am writing to CHIRP to voice some concerns I have with a new contract that my company has taken on with a customer airline.

Scheduled maintenance is done at AAA by line maintenance staff essentially on the ramp in the open. This maintenance is called "line A checks" but embraces far in excess of a normal line A check in that it includes split "C" check modules. In my opinion this is non productive in many ways and can lead to poor maintenance due to the environment. Being an avionics engineer I am not usually involved with the heavier part of the checks, but it is obvious to me that these should not be being performed on the ramp. Late one afternoon, I was asked to rectify a number of external lighting defects, in torrential rain, that were found during the "C Check". At this point I lost my sense of humour and left work, as I was on overtime anyway. Those who were on shift did not have that option, either having to continue or refuse to carry on. Needless to say, as engineers they carried on with at least one engineer now off sick with a heavy cold. Things like engine checks with the cowlings open and others like lubrication of the landing gear etc should be done in controlled environments. My company does lease a hangar from time to time but of course they try to avoid it as much as possible to reduce costs. With the inclement English weather, even in the summer months, some tasks are quite daunting with poor access, minimal equipment and poor lighting, as most of these checks will be done at night. The other factor involved is lack of manpower. Whilst the company is trying to employ more staff in my opinion we will still be undermanned for the work expected in the summer months to come. That is if we manage to employ more staff. At present we are trying to cover this extra input with overtime, again something that puts pressure on the existing staff.

It is one thing pulling out all the stops for casualties but an entirely different matter being expected to do routine maintenance and inspections in the open to this extent. To my mind Engineers and Mechanics should not be expected or indeed pressurised to do such tasks out in the open. Human factors come into this and I can assure you that maintenance to this level in the above conditions is not good maintenance.

**CHIRP Comment:** We addressed this issue to the maintenance organisation concerned, which provided a full and detailed response. It would appear that the reference in the report to C check items is not accurate, and that adequate lighting equipment is available.

The organisation has reminded the line maintenance supervision that maintenance should only be performed in a suitable environment, including the use of a hangar, where prevailing weather conditions necessitate this.

It is worth highlighting that in addition to the certifying engineer's responsibilities, management and supervision within maintenance organisations have a duty of care towards certifying engineers,

ensuring that they have a suitable environment in which to perform the required tasks (Part-145.A.25).

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### LOST SOMETHING? THEN REPORT IT!

**Report Text:** At the end of the day's flying, I asked the Captain to report on his aircraft. Although he considered the aircraft to be serviceable, he reported a loose article (a pen). When asked to describe the pen to permit positive identification, he didn't know what it looked like, because it was the previous Captain who had dropped it and who had decided to report it to the ongoing Captain only. When asked why he had not reported it to Engineering this Captain's answer was "I did not want to delay the aircraft". So the aircraft flew for 4 sectors with a loose article somewhere in the flight deck. Having informed him of the dangers of loose articles, he said "I don't see what the problem is! What harm can it do?"

I then informed him of engineering procedure when a loose article is reported, but he still seemed unconvinced of how serious this incident was. So I removed a keel access panel to show him the array of flying control components just underneath the flight deck floor and pointed out the dangers to the safety of the aircraft and its occupants, should such an article migrate into the compartment and jam the controls! Subsequently, two separate loose article checks within the flight deck failed to locate the missing pen. A further loose article check of the compartment below the flight deck floor eventually located a pen with its cap missing. Luckily it had passed all the flying control components and was found nestling below a black box computer.

Fortunately, one of our ground staff colleagues was able to identify the pen, the Captain who had dropped it, and the fact that the Captain had retained the cap of their lost pen!

Reporting it at the first opportunity could so easily have prevented the event. Given the current trend within the aviation industry to marginalise cost by not having an engineer attend the aircraft until night stop, I urgently request all crewmembers not to marginalise their safety, or that of everyone else on board their aircraft. If you are not sure, then ask for engineering; we are there for your safety.

This incident remains just that, "an incident" not a disaster! But only by luck, not judgement.

**CHIRP Comment:** This report serves to highlight, to everybody involved in the operation and maintenance of aircraft, the risks associated with "lost property" and the need to find it or report it, before flight!

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### WHEN IS A "DEFECT" NOT A "DEFECT"?

**Report Text:** We provide the maintenance for the ### fleet. Recently, an "Information for flight crews"

sheet was faxed to our office to advise on the [flight deck] door code change. However, it is the item headed "Computer Resets" that I would like to highlight and, in particular, the use of the general term "FOR INFO" and that such an entry "Does not require entry in the action taken column."

From a flight crew viewpoint this is maybe all well and good, but from an engineer's view it seems to me unsatisfactory. I would appreciate your comments and whether overuse of this term and non-action could lead to confusion on how best to respond for some engineers. For myself, if I see the term FOR INFO ONLY written in the tech log, whilst aware the intention is to pass information onto the next crew flying, I will ignore the statement and consider a defect has been raised, which requires me to carry out appropriate action, make an entry in the action taken column and sign the CRS.

My intention is to clarify the correct use of the tech log in this way.

**CHIRP** Comment: This matter has been addressed to the specific operator concerned, but is a subject that has been around for as long as Technical Logs have been in use.

Each operator is required to define the procedures for use of their own Technical Log in their Maintenance Management Exposition (JAR-OPS 1.905(a)) and Operations Manual Part A (JAR-OPS 1.1045), and should ensure that all flight crew and maintenance staff, including those at subcontracted organisations, are adequately instructed in their use (JAR-OPS 1.175). Additionally, both flight crews and engineers have a responsibility to ensure any recorded anomaly is allowable for subsequent dispatch, in accordance with the operator's Minimum Equipment List (MEL) (JAR-OPS 1.030)

CAA (SRG) Maintenance Standards Department have advised that some operators record this type of information outside the Technical Log, e.g. as Notices To Crew. Other operators do use the Technical Log for this purpose in the following way; flight crews make a "For Info Only" entry in the "left hand column" and give details, together with their name/signature for tracking purposes, in the "right hand column". By recording it in this way no maintenance response or certification is required. Where the report is made in the "left hand column", then it will require engineering judgement to assess how to respond; in the simplest case this would be as "Noted".

We would be interested to hear whether other engineers have experienced similar problems with the use of this type of entry and associated procedures.

## CAA (SRG) ATSINS

The following CAA (SRG) ATS Standards Department ATSINS have been issued since April 2005:

CAA (SRG) ATS Information Notices are published on the CAA (SRG) website -

[www.caa.co.uk/application.aspx?categoryid=33&pagetype=65&applicationid=11&mode=list&type=search&search=atsin](http://www.caa.co.uk/application.aspx?categoryid=33&pagetype=65&applicationid=11&mode=list&type=search&search=atsin)

### Number 64 - Issued 25 April 2005

Incorrect Operation of Some SSR Aircraft Transponders.

Advice to ATCOs that some SSR aircraft transponders may switch to standby mode in particular circumstances

### Number 65 - Issued 18 May 2005

Procedures to be Applied in the Event that a Pilot or Vehicle Driver Becomes Lost in the Manoeuvring Area

### Number 66 - Issued 17 June 2005

Incorrect Operation of Some Aircraft SSR Transponders

Advice to ATCOs on an additional failure mode to that described in ATSIN Number 64, in which the assigned Mode A code may be temporarily replaced by a code of 0607.

### Number 67 - Issued 22 June 2005

Proposed Changes to Medical Certification Requirements Applicable to Holders of a Flight Information Service Officer Licence

Back issues of FEEDBACK are available on our website: [www.chirp.co.uk](http://www.chirp.co.uk)

## CAA (SRG) FODCOMS

The following CAA (SRG) FODCOMS have been issued since April 2005:

CAA (SRG) Flight Operations Department Communications are published on the CAA (SRG) website - [www.caa.co.uk](http://www.caa.co.uk)

### 11/2005

#### 1. Commercial Air Transport Operations Using a Radar Information Service

Recommends that operators, who use Class G airspace should remind crews that it is good airmanship practice to take avoiding action whenever RIS gives conflicting traffic information, thereby ensuring that the confliction does not develop to the point where a TCAS warning is received.

### 12/2005

#### 1. Aeroplane Performance Data Requirements

Details the implications for operators of The Air Navigation Order (2005) amendment to the performance requirements for aeroplanes flying for the purpose of public transport.

### 13/2005

#### 1. Level Bust Prevention - Best Practice

Advice to operators on flight crew procedures/training to avoid the principal causes of level bust incidents.

### 14/2005

#### 1. Ban On All Passengers Carrying Cigarette Lighters on All Aircraft Entering United States Airspace

Recommendations to operators engaged in flights to/from the United States and some Caribbean States regarding the ban on cigarette lighters carried by passengers, effective 14 April 2005.

### 15/2005

#### 1. Flight Time Limitations - CAP371 Fourth Edition

Provides timetable for the approval of FTL schemes by the 1 April 2006 compliance date.

Details additional Standard Variations available with CAP 371 Fourth Edition.

List of Frequently Asked Questions related to CAP371 and CAA (SRG) responses.

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E-mail: fclweb@srg.caa.co.uk

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