

CHIRP FEEDBACK

Issue No: 15

Spring 2005

EDITORIAL

In December 2004 the Civil Aviation Authority (Safety Regulation Group) Flight Operations Department issued FODCOM 28/2004 (www.caa.co.uk/publications). This highlighted an incident involving a US operator in relation to the deployment of an evacuation slide and the failure of their SOPs in relation to the deployment. Cabin crew members operated the emergency exit and immediately pulled the manual inflation handle before the exit had fully opened. The slide failed to deploy correctly rendering the exit unusable for an emergency evacuation. This procedure was not in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendation to ensure that the door has fully opened before pulling the handle.

Kirsty Arnold
Cabin Crew Programme Manager

Number of Reports Received - January - March 2005:

34

Report Topics Have Included:

Ground Staff Issues
Cabin Air Quality
Company Sickness Policies
Pressure from Crewing Dept
Security Issues

What's in this Issue?

	Page
Contacting CHIRP	Bottom of this Page
Lights Would Not Dim and Seat Belt Signs Not Illum.	1
Depleted SEP Equipment.....	2
Secure or Not?	2
Hi ... Pleased to Meet You!	2
Reporting Sick - 3 Reports.....	2
Boarding Whilst Refuelling Taking Place.....	3
Use of Mobile Phones	3
Report Form	Outside Back Cover

BACK ISSUES

Back issues of CABIN CREW FEEDBACK are available on our website: www.chirp.co.uk

REPORTS

LIGHTS WOULD NOT DIM AND SEAT BELT SIGNS WOULD NOT ILLUMINATE

Report Text: On boarding (downroute) I noticed that the aft cabin lights were stuck on the high setting - neither the cabin crew nor flight crew could adjust the setting.

Although we are required to dim the lights for a night time take-off, this obviously could not be done. The Captain said this was OK as the engineers at our location could not fix the problem, so we would have to go back to Base (with passengers). I was extremely unhappy at this, but had to follow my Captain's orders.

The aircraft also had a problem with the overhead seat belt signs, again the flight crew were unable to turn them on. The Captain said as long as we could make PA's this was OK.

My concern also is that this particular aircraft has had these faults for at least a week. I feel that as we were unable to adhere to CAA regulations, the aircraft faults should have been fixed and not been an Acceptable Aircraft Deviation.

CHIRP Comment: In response to the first point raised by the reporter, it is worth noting that dimming lights is not a regulation, merely a recommendation.

CHIRP raised this report with the Engineering Department who were aware of the problems which could not be rectified immediately.

There is a list of allowable defects that can be deferred to permit the aircraft to continue to operate. This is known as the Minimum Equipment List, or MEL, to which both the Captain and the Engineer will refer in the event of a defect occurring. The MEL for the aircraft in the report allows the seat belt sign to be 'Inop' and the affected passenger seat, crew seat or toilet to be occupied, provided that the PA system

CABIN CREW FEEDBACK is also available on the **CHIRP** website - www.chirp.co.uk

A Cabin Crew Safety Newsletter

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

is working. The PA will then be used to announce when passengers must be secured in their seats and when they can be released.

The reporter was concerned that the aircraft was not adhering to CAA Regulations. Acceptable Deferred Defects, (ADD), is an approved procedure that permits the aircraft to continue in service with allowable defects that do not hazard airworthiness; the lighting defects were just such defects. Although a nuisance, the problems did not affect safe operations.

DEPLETED SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Report Text: We have been experiencing an excessive number of Engineering "Acceptable Deferred Defects" recently (departing from Base and elsewhere) where we are short of O₂ masks and O₂ bottles/½ empty O₂ bottles/inoperative emergency torches due "Nil Stock" spares. What happens in an emergency? Or a steep descent over high terrain? Our lives are being placed at risk. CAA must be made aware.

CHIRP Comment: This report was raised with the Operator who had been experiencing problems whilst a new spares computer system was introduced. The Company stated that safety equipment available on board always complied with the minimum number required by the relevant Minimum Equipment List.

With regard to portable oxygen bottles and masks, there should be one serviceable portable oxygen bottle for each required crew member.

In relation to torches, the Operator advised that their procedures state that torches may be inoperative or missing provided at least one torch is available at each main passenger door and provided crew members have a torch of equivalent characteristics readily available.

SECURE OR NOT?

Report Text: In Charge Cabin Crew Members frequently pass "cabin secure" to the flight crew when the galleys have not been secured. On a number of occasions (pre take-off) the report has been given and the pilots have gone to turn onto the runway only to notice us still securing the galley on the flight deck door CCTV system.

In Charges need to remember that cabin secure means the WHOLE cabin not just the passengers.

CHIRP Comment: JAR-OPS 1.325 Securing of passenger cabin and galleys states that a) an operator shall establish procedures to ensure that before taxiing, take-off and landing all exit and escape paths are unobstructed and b) the commander shall ensure that before take-off and landing and whenever deemed necessary in the interests of safety, all equipment and baggage is properly secured.

Operators should have an SOP in place to ensure that the cabin secure check includes galleys and that this is not given until these areas are secure.

Hi ... PLEASSED TO MEET YOU!

Report Text: Since the merger of my Company a problem has persisted between cabin crew and the flight crew from the other merged airline. CRM does not exist between certain flight crew and cabin crew. The "CRM" problem has been reported to company management on several occasions to no avail.

On a recent flight I reported in the hotel with my crew - a different flight crew from the inbound flight - the flight crew did not speak or introduce themselves to any of the cabin crew. I was the In Charge - the flight crew did not know that though! The Captain only told me his name when I went into the flight deck with some paperwork some 45 minutes later. I feel if we have a major incident that CRM will not exist amongst the flight crew and cabin crew.

On the outbound sector flight crew boarded straight into the cockpit so the cabin crew at the rear did not even see who they were. Pre-merger our flight crew were trained to walk to the back of the aircraft before pax boarding and introduce themselves if they had not done so in the briefing area - why is this not consistent?

I feel this is putting a potential incident to the forefront.

CHIRP Comment: Although this matter might affect CRM it is principally one of courtesy and not just on the part of the flight crew. Whilst in an ideal world flight crew should always introduce themselves to all members of the cabin crew before operating the first sector, sometimes this isn't always possible often due to time constraints. In such circumstances maybe the In Charge should take the initiative and introduce himself/herself to the flight crew at the first convenient moment; this would avoid the situation described above and make for a happier working relationship. Just a thought!

REPORTING SICK

CHIRP Narrative: We have received a number of reports on the subject of reporting sick and an apparent reluctance on the part of crew members to do so. Here are a selection of those received:

(1)

Report Text: I started to lose my voice and felt uncertain as to whether to operate or not. Nowadays, crew are very wary of going sick for any reason whatsoever, despite what the Company says about "if you are unfit to fly".

I spoke to the In Charge who said they would rather I operated! Apart from not having any voice I felt

perfectly well. I did explain that it was from a safety point of view that I sought his/her opinion. They told me that if I did not wish to operate I would have to have the Company doctor sign me off.

Whilst I acknowledge I am an adult and therefore perfectly capable of making a decision for myself I admit to having felt somewhat under pressure to operate, which I did. After the flight I felt unwell and contacted a doctor, who said I should not have operated.

What I would like to know, in plain English and in black and white, is if a crew member should fly AT ALL AND IN ANY CAPACITY, when they have no voice? My missing voice does not endanger the aircraft, however, in my humble opinion, it does pose potential fatal problems to all and sundry should anything go wrong.

(2)

Report Text: I have just operated two sectors AAA(UK)-BBB(US)-AAA. We had 2 cabin crew with dreadful colds. Both said they were being harassed by the Company for going sick before and were scared of going sick again. One crew member had so much pain in their ears that they were crying. This has to stop.

We are all liable to come down with colds too, when flying with these crew.

(3)

Report Text: I am currently off sick with a very nasty flu virus that has been going round. For the past month I have continually flown with crew who are snivelling, smelling of Albas Oil or on variations of cough and flu medicine. Crew are not going sick for fear of reprisals from the Company and therefore putting everyone else at risk. I am sick of this as it happens every year at this time and the warnings are printed in staff literature pressurising us into not reporting sick when we are clearly suffering. Something has got to change. This is madness.

CHIRP Comment: In the case of the first report, the reporter should not have operated for if an evacuation had been necessary, the commands required could not have been delivered by a person who had lost their voice.

More generally, JAR-OPS requires the following:

JAR-OPS 1.085 (d) (4) states that 'a crew member shall not perform duties on an aeroplane, if he is any doubt of being able to accomplish his assigned duties'.

JAR-OPS 1.995 (b) states that 'an operator shall ensure that each cabin crew member is competent to perform duties in accordance with procedures in the Operations Manual'.

It is not always easy for operators to list every ailment which would preclude a crew member from operating, it is down to individuals to declare themselves unfit. Not always easy these days, but there are formal procedures available to crew members if they feel unduly pressured into operating when unfit.

BOARDING WHILST REFUELLING IS TAKING PLACE

Report Text: Company Duty Manager ### requested that we start the boarding. I asked which was the alternative exit. The response was "that's for you and the Captain to sort out". I tried to explain the Company Procedure and I was told that it was nothing to do with ground staff. A colleague of the Duty Manager suggested D3L as alternative exit. This is right by the overwing and the refuelling truck.

The dispatcher then appeared who was also unaware of the SOP. Fortunately the engineer was and 4R was allotted and boarding commenced. This is the second time that I have had this problem in (foreign outstation). The Duty Manager was very aggressive in their manner and in trying to assert their authority. Someone of less experience might have conceded. It's clear that the station is not familiar with SOPs.

CHIRP Comment: CHIRP contacted the Company concerned and learnt that the refuelling procedure was in the process of being rewritten with the aim of keeping things as consistent as possible on the ground. The new procedure has now been incorporated into the Ground Operations Manual.

Please note that the procedure referred to in the report is not a JAR-OPS requirement but a company procedure.

USE OF MOBILE PHONES

Report Text: After the meal service I went up to check on the flight deck, the FO was using their mobile. I commented that I didn't think you could use mobiles in flight and had a very curt response asking me to show where in the Operations Manual it says you cannot use a mobile (in any mode) in flight. The FO continued to use it.

It is my understanding that mobile phones cannot be even switched on during the flight. Please could you clarify if you can use a mobile in any mode during the flight?

CHIRP Comment: The reporter was correct in their understanding, flight crew and cabin crew should observe the same restrictions as passengers; these require that mobile telephones must remain SWITCHED OFF throughout flight. For more information see Aeronautical Information Circular (AIC) Pink 1/2004 (Pink 62) at www.ais.org.uk