

# CHIRP FEEDBACK

Issue No: 103

3/2012

## ADMINISTRATION/CABIN CREW MANAGER APPOINTMENT

We are pleased to advise that Miss Stephanie Colbourne has joined the CHIRP team in the role of Administration/Cabin Crew Manager.

Stephanie previously held a flight training administration position with a UK airline and in addition to her Administration role will progressively assume responsibility for managing the Cabin Crew Programme.

## ENGINEER REPORTS

### TOWING PRESSURE

**Report Text:** I was given a task to change a wiring loom. The aircraft was supposedly already positioned inside a hangar.

When we arrived, it was still parked outside. When we approached a manager in the hangar, we were told that this was because they didn't have anyone available to "ride the brakes" and could I assist? I said that I hadn't done this for many years, but under the circumstances, reluctantly, I would. He went off to organise the towing crew and I entered the hangar crew room only to see several engineers sitting in front of the TV.

Outside, the tug driver had connected the tow-bar and I was approached by the same manager who told me they were ready for me to enter the aircraft. I asked where the rest of the team were and he replied that this was all that were going to be involved! I told him that even though I had not been involved in towing for a long time, I knew that there were minimum manpower requirements to accomplish this task. (The company procedure states that the minimum number is six - a person in overall control, tug driver, headset operator, brake person, left and right wing tip observers, tail man. Everyone should be briefed as a group and be conversant with the aircraft towing procedures manual.)

I told him that I was unhappy to proceed under the circumstances. Another manager subsequently phoned me and despite initially agreeing with me about the legality of what was being asked of me, he then attempted to persuade me to do it. At this point I told him I was not comfortable with the situation and I wasn't going to be involved with this tow. This resulted in me being recalled for a "chat" and I left the hangar.

Later, I was shown a copy of a correctly certified checklist for the tow, which I can only assume had been subsequently carried out in full compliance with the company procedures as well as having the correct amount of people (who supposedly weren't available!)

**Lessons Learned:** I felt intimidated by the hangar manager to assist in an unsafe tow in an unfamiliar working area. I also feel that I was not supported in my decision. There have been several high profile Health and Safety incidents recently within the company and for managers to ask, and subsequently expect, staff to work outside of the company procedures is a dangerously arrogant attitude.

**CHIRP Comment:** The reporter was correct to resist the pressure on him to participate in the aircraft move as described.

The circumstances of this incident were raised with senior engineering managers on the reporter's behalf. The company SOPs were confirmed to be adequate and appropriate; the requirement for compliance has been reinforced within the organisation concerned.

## ATC REPORTS

### MORE IS BETTER (FB 102) - A COMMENT

The report 'More is Better' in the previous issue proposed combining ATC instructions to avoid the additional interruption to flight deck tasks/procedures caused by two separate instructions.

**Report Text:** The writer, who complained about frequency changes being separate from other instructions, fails to acknowledge that a number of ATC instructions require a mandatory readback and, as such, are not allowed to include a frequency change instruction.

The CHIRP comment suggesting that, when possible, ATCOs should allow a short interval between the two transmissions is food for thought.

**CHIRP Comment:** This comment regarding ATC instructions that require a mandatory readback is correct.

### INCORRECT READBACKS

**Report Text:** This is an ongoing problem that I am finding with more and more pilots, professionals, trainers and PPL holders. On more occasions than I can remember, I have issued descent instructions in accordance with CAP 413, Radiotelephony Manual; Chapter 3 - General Phraseology; Para 1.2.3 b), with regard to climbing and descending to an ALTITUDE or HEIGHT as follows:

"ABC123, descend to altitude (or height) two thousand feet".

I have tried to obtain a correct read-back, but pilots do not seem to understand my point. On one occasion I asked a professional pilot to read back the instruction correctly. He stated that he had been "told" never to use the word "to" in a climb/decent instruction. I later spoke

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to the pilot on the telephone and he apologised as he had checked CAP 413 after landing. He said that everyone omits the words "to altitude/height" and I would have difficulty correcting everyone who does it on a daily basis. He might be correct, but ignorance is no excuse. It seems that all levels of pilot are starting to do this, even training schools.

Lessons Learned: I suggest that both ATC and Pilots stick to standard phraseology and stop omitting words. We all get paid rather well, no matter which side of the radio we are on and it is either pure laziness and/or a lack of understanding on the part of the individual. There are no excuses, especially where safety is concerned.

**CHIRP Comment:** The current UK phraseology for the issue/readback of a climb/descent instruction to a Flight Level omits the word 'to'; however, for climb/descent instructions to an altitude or height the instruction/readback is as stated by the reporter (CAP 413; Chapter 3: Para 1.2.3 a) & b) refers.

**Incorrect readbacks by flight crew that were not challenged by ATCOs were contributory factors in a significant number of loss-of-separation incidents investigated by the UK Airprox Board.**

**There is anecdotal evidence that this and other non-ICAO standard phrases required to be used within UK airspace are not widely understood by non-UK flight crew. The CAA is working to eliminate, where possible, differences between the UK and other ICAO States, which can be confusing to pilots.**

**This particular example of non-standard UK climb/descent phraseology emanated from investigations into level bust incidents by the UK Level Bust Working Group and was supported by a safety case. The matter has been reviewed by the CAA/Industry RTF Phraseology Working Group and a proposal for aligning the current UK and ICAO phraseology is currently being considered.**

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## **SECURITY VS SAFETY?**

**Report Text:** Some years ago the Airport Authority elected to close one of the 2 taxiways linking the GA and main terminal aprons during the summer months so that the car parking area could be extended. This had a detrimental effect on the one-way flow of taxiing traffic to and from the GA apron such that a grass taxi-link was established; this was subsequently reinforced with a nylon mesh to improve its all weather capability which permitted its use throughout the summer period; although it still suffers from water logging in the winter months and is consequently closed to aircraft and vehicular access. This has not normally been a problem as the taxiway was reopened when the demand for car park space reduced.

Recently, following a DfT inspection, an additional security post was required to be established on the south-side adjacent to the taxiway that remains open to protect the Critical Part (CP) boundary between the commercial element of the airport and the GA apron area. (There has never before been a security presence on the south-side of the airport and those

wishing to enter the CP from this area have had to cross the runway first and then report to security.) Anyone now wishing to cross in a vehicle from southside to northside (subject to certain exemptions) must present themselves at the security post before requesting a runway crossing. This in itself has no impact on ATC; however the airport authority, following advice from DfT that another security post would be required if they reopened the second taxiway, has elected to leave the taxiway closed throughout the winter. Inevitably the grass-link taxiway became waterlogged and was not available for vehicles or aircraft.

So what has been the effect of these increased security procedures?

1. There is no flow of air traffic to and from the south-side causing ATC to hold arriving aircraft north-side whenever an aircraft is awaiting departure on the single taxiway. The airfield is compact and there are relatively few places to do this causing unnecessary congestion with the commercial operation.
2. Aircraft cannot enter or cross the runway from the single taxiway whilst inbound flights established on the ILS are within 8nm of touchdown. This leads to delays; additional crossing of the runway to depart from the north-side; occasionally rushed departures or 'rule-bending' to get the departure away.
3. Ops, RFFS and engineer vehicles now have to enter the runway to bypass the waterlogged grass-link leading to an unnecessary increase in vehicles on the runway.
4. In LVPs, Ops are required to cross the runway twice every couple of hours to change over the security guards. During recent low visibility operations this changeover was rightly delayed by a controller working busy traffic in 300m visibility without the use of a Surface Movement Radar, only for an additional distraction to be caused by a number of telephone and R/T requests to cross the runway.

The airport has one of the worst weather records in the country due to its location. With no SMR, significant steps have been made to reduce runway crossings, notably in LVPs, but now due to the revised security procedures and a lack of space on the south-side of the airport, controllers are faced with additional vehicular and aircraft runway crossings. The situation is clearly detrimental to safety and, despite representations to airport and unit management as to the increased risk of a runway incursion or worse, controller error in LVPs, there is no sign of any imminent resolution.

I am proud of my organisation's safety record and work actively to improve it; also, the airport is managed with a good emphasis on safety. I firmly believe that the airport and this ATS Unit have been forced into a less safe situation by the over zealous application of security measures to nullify a perceived threat which in reality is non-existent and which has gone unchallenged for over 10 years.

5. So, in summary, we have sacrificed aviation safety for a non-existent risk that was perfectly adequately controlled by existing security procedures.

**CHIRP Comment:** This report suggests that the imposition of additional security measures on an airport operation has resulted in a less than optimum

operational solution and a possible reduction in the safety margin. Insofar as the operational staff were aware, neither of these aspects were apparently assessed against the need for the revised security arrangements as would be required under the organisation's Safety Management System.

The concerns of the reporter and colleagues were referred to the management concerned. The management response acknowledged that the closure of the taxiway had had a potential impact on capacity in some circumstances but, following a risk assessment and a minor change to the runway crossing procedure, it had been concluded that the closure had no adverse impact on safety.

The management's conclusions were not shared by the reporter and operational colleagues, who considered that the increased number of runway crossings arising from the new procedures increased the risk of a runway incursion incident.

In light of the reporter's ongoing concerns, the management are undertaking a further review. The reported concerns have also been referred to CAA (SRG) Air Traffic and Aerodrome Standards Department for assessment, CHIRP to be advised of the outcome.

## **SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY**

**Report Text:** Since working at my unit the pressure to come into work whilst sick has been steadily increasing. The company have stipulated that when sick you must:

- 1) Call in every day you are sick, whether you were due in or not;
- 2) Have a 'Return to Work' interview with your watch manager on your return;
- 3) After the third period of sickness within one year you must have an interview with Human Resources.

This has always pressured people to be at work when they should not. The stakes have now been further increased by the following management statement: "If staff are off for three periods of sickness in a 12-month rolling period, the third period of sickness will automatically be deducted from their salary. Staff then have five days to appeal. Please be aware that during the appeal HR will check all previous sicknesses and if you have not followed the company procedures then this may hinder your appeal."

In my opinion this is encouraging people to turn up for a duty in an unfit state with a commensurate affect on flight safety.

Lessons Learned: Whilst understanding that a company must have a robust policy with regard to attendance levels, an ATS provider should be encouraging staff to have a responsible attitude to fitness for duty and not threatening staff with salary deductions.

**CHIRP Comment:** Most if not all organisations have a policy to manage sickness/absence (S/A). Many such policies include procedures similar to those described in Sub paras 1) - 3) above, which are reasonable.

However, as we have pointed out before, in cases where an individual's licence holder responsibilities

include the requirement to report fit for duty, it is incumbent on management to administer the S/A policy in such a way that there is no risk that an individual is placed under pressure to report, when otherwise he/she would declare themselves unfit.

It is acknowledged that management has the right to take appropriate administrative action in individual cases of abuse of an S/A policy. Notwithstanding this, a policy that includes an automatic salary deduction on the basis of 'guilty until proven innocent' is contrary to the provisions of a 'just culture' and would not appear to be compatible with the management responsibilities within a Safety Management System.

Any instances where a licence holder perceives that he/she has been placed under pressure to attend work in less than a fully fit state because of their concerns of possible repercussions under an employment policy should report this through the CAA MOR scheme. The scheme permits a report to be submitted confidentially directly to the CAA. (See CAA website for details).

More generally there would seem to be an obligation on the CAA to ensure that an organisation's documented HR policy does not have any adverse operational safety implications. The reported concerns have been raised with CAA (SRG) Air Traffic and Aerodrome Standards Department.

## **FLIGHT CREW REPORTS**

### **DO UNTO OTHERS AS.....**

**Report Text:** Whilst briefing for departure from a Southern European destination, I heard what I thought was just some breakthrough on the ground frequency. Someone said, "Do you know what you're doing". Later, whilst trying to get an R/T call in for Push and Start both myself and the first officer heard the pilot of a non-UK airline arguing quite aggressively in English with Ground Control. Comments from the pilot like, "It's all your fault"; "We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you" and, "Just get it sorted": "Get a grip" was the final comment.

Throughout, the ATC controller apologised, refused to be drawn and continued professionally to issue instructions and clearances. All this occurred despite the ATIS clearly stating 'Controller on the job training'. As we taxied out I felt the need to support the controller and as the frequency was now clear I suggested that the controller raise a safety report.

I am assuming the outburst was from the captain; however, having listened to the exchange I would question, on this occasion, the ability of that pilot to do his job given his apparent state of mind. His comments were effectively bullying; if he does it to controllers does he do it to his First Officer? Did it continue throughout the flight?

Departing from this airfield on the runway in use at the time is towards high ground, is often performance restricted and requires extra attention. We must realise how a distraction like this can effect our judgement and ability to deal with problems; I feel that the safety of his flight may well have been compromised as a result of this somewhat one-sided exchange.

Also, it's worth considering the effect that the comments might have had on the controller's performance. As pilots I'm sure we all think that the effects of poor CRM generally impact on ourselves and cabin crew. But controllers also have a high pressure job and undue stress can also, I'm sure, impact on their performance, particularly in this instance as there was a possibility that the individual might have been a trainee.

Lessons Learned: Stay in control, put issues aside until you're on the ground.

**CHIRP Comment:** Regrettably, R/T exchanges such as that overheard by this reporter are not confined to non-UK flight crew.

Two points are worth making. The first is to maintain strict R/T discipline and to resolve any differences related to an ATC service by other means. The second is to resist the temptation to intervene or become involved in such a situation; it has been demonstrated that cognitive performance can be adversely affected when distracted by such a situation.

## NOTIFICATION OF LONG-TERM WORK IN PROGRESS

**Report Text:** Recently I operated into and out of XXX (Southern Europe) without being aware that one third of the runway was closed due to long term runway works. From what I can ascertain, here is the situation:

1. In some cases, airport or governmental authorities are declaring that longer term airport works are actually permanent and incorporated in the AIP so that they do not have to publish NOTAMs for the duration of the runway/airport works.
2. The chart publishers, knowing that it is not a permanent change, do not publish a new chart but simply list the semi permanent change as a "Chart Change Notice" in the supplementary notes to the published procedures. (This also saves them from the expense of publishing a new chart and then re-publishing the old chart).

Possible solutions:

1. That in the case of longer term runway/airfield works, airport and governmental authorities publish the details of the works in the NOTAMs. (This is what NOTAMs are meant for!)
2. The chart publishers publish accurate airfield information on charts, which at all times reflect the state of the airfield.

I believe that the best solution is to publish the details of the works in the NOTAMs. Even if the chart publishers were to republish accurate chart information the changeover to the new chart would have to be promulgated by NOTAM. Any way you look at it, an effective solution requires NOTAMs to be published which are accurate.

NOTAM filters: This is NOT a NOTAM filter issue. Looking at the example below, there is nowhere in any NOTAM system that this information is published. Example: XXX is currently undergoing long term runway works. These are not listed in the NOTAMs. However, the Chart Change Notices state: "Eff 25Aug11 THR18

displaced by 1972'(601m), rwy length 18/36 and TORA/LDA 7871'(2399m), PAPI and ALS rwy 18 u/s." My company airfield brief warned about current runway works but when I looked at the NOTAMs I decided that there was nothing to affect my flight. I subsequently operated into and out of XXX without being aware that one third of the runway was closed. I submitted an ASR, but still no action.

Lessons Learned: Airport and governmental authorities should publish accurate NOTAM information and not make temporary changes to the AIP in order to avoid having to publish NOTAMs. Technically speaking, all pilots should check Chart Change Notices, but in reality, few do. Having to check Chart Change Notices is yet another "work around" because of the failure of the NOTAM system. It adds another layer of complexity and presents another opportunity for error of omission.

If they can publish a NOTAM about grass cutting at XXX, why can't they also mention that one third of the runway is closed? This is a serious safety issue that should be addressed A.S.A.P.

**CHIRP Comment:** ICAO Annex 15 specifies that a NOTAM is issued to promulgate information of a temporary nature (not more than 90 days). If an activity is longer than 90 days, it should be promulgated as an AIP Supplement. In some States a NOTAM would normally also be issued identifying the key activities/changes and referencing the AIP Supplement. In some cases, where there is extensive and very long term work in progress, this may be published in the AIP. A potential safety problem arises when the international standards are not followed.

As noted in this report, some commercial providers do their best to provide updates to their customers including the use of Change Notices (CNs); however, CNs should not be regarded as a definitive source.

So, from an operational perspective where does this leave the aircraft commander? The CAA has provided the following comment:

'Globally in recent years there has been a significant increase in data that the respective State AIP and associated NOTAM system has to assimilate and disseminate.

AOC holders use various systems to present flight safety critical data to end users; this can include the use of dispatch Service Providers or total reliance on State provision and presentation of data (AIP + NOTAM).

The core issue is that the data must be adequately managed and in particular that flight safety critical information is presented in a user friendly format for flight crew but also for flight technical departments so that they might provide the necessary provision of flight safety critical information such as take-off and landing performance.

If there are safety concerns with the provision of airfield data, they should be reported through the operator's Flight Safety departments for onward transmission to the CAA or directly to the CAA through the MOR system. In addition it is paramount that, if an issue is

identified, it is reported to the provider of the Commercial AIS product that may have been contracted by an airline or similar organisation.'

It is understood that Air Safety Reports have identified other cases where the NOTAM information/published chart presentations for airfields is not representative of the actual airfield layout; in some cases this may involve safety critical aspects such as the representation of information such as runway length information and the location of holding points. If this is the case it is vital that operators report the matter, as recommended above, in the most expeditious manner to relevant parties so that the information may be disseminated as widely as necessary.

From a CHIRP perspective, as those with longer memories will recall, prior to the introduction of electronic data, most organisations employed flight technical specialists, whose role included the extraction and inclusion of all relevant safety critical data, which was provided to flight crew in 'trip kits'. Some AOC holders retain this capability, whereas others have relied increasingly on the aircraft commander to extract all of the relevant safety critical information from the data available as part of his/her pre-flight duties.

The key issue is as to whether it is reasonable for aircraft commanders to be expected to sift through large amounts of questionably relevant information to extract safety critical items in the often limited time available, or whether an operator should ensure as part of their Safety Management System that all relevant safety critical information is available to the aircraft commander in a user friendly format.

The CAA advises that work has started at the UK level to develop best practise for UK NOTAM, with a focus on improving the content. This activity is also being promoted within Europe. The issue over NOTAM proliferation has been delivered to ICAO and CAA will continue to promote activity at international level for a review of the entire NOTAM system.

## **RIGHT SHIP - WRONG POSITION!**

**Report Text:** Recently a diving support vessel (DSV) operating in the North Sea working within the 500m area of the ### gas platform complex was advised of an ad hoc helicopter operation to transfer a member of the diving team. The helicopter had been chartered by the diving contractor.

The DSV was positioned to stand by to receive the helicopter. Shortly thereafter, the helicopter contacted the bridge of the DSV on VHF to request the vessel's position co-ordinates. The DSV bridge confirmed the vessel's co-ordinates to the helicopter crew, who then advised that the flight had been planned and conducted on the basis of different Latitude/Longitude (LAT/LONG) coordinates. The flight crew advised they were too far away to divert to the actual position of the DSV due to fuel endurance. The transfer was aborted and another flight scheduled, using the correct position data

Lessons learned: Regular, scheduled helicopter crew change flights to/from oil and gas platforms are

conducted with known and proven position information. Ad hoc flights to/from DSV's that are not in a fixed location require more careful pre-flight planning; this should include a cross check of the vessels position and could be achieved in one of several ways:

- 1) LAT/LONG information cross checked by a position check relative to the nearest platform(s).
- 2) Prior to departure, confirm by email/fax back to the DSV the vessel's actual LAT/LONG and reconfirm with helicopter flight crew.

**CHIRP Comment:** The reporter requested that this report be published as a reminder to flight crew engaged in off-shore support operations to be aware of the pre-flight and operational implications of vessels not always being in a fixed location.

## **MAYDAY RELAY**

A recent report submitted by a General Aviation pilot described a situation in which the pilot experienced engine difficulties over the southern Irish Sea when inbound to Ireland.

The pilot transmitted a 'MAYDAY' call when at 3,500ft amsl but this was not heard by the UK Distress and Diversion Cell as the aircraft was outside the area of cover for the aircraft's altitude. Also, although the major Irish Air Traffic Service Units (ATSUs) monitor 121.5 MHz, the pilot's calls were not received; this was due again to the altitude of the aircraft.

Fortunately, an overflying transatlantic UK flight heard the MAYDAY call and acted as a relay until two-way contact with an Irish ATSU was established.

The purpose of publishing this summary is to raise awareness that in some geographical locations a pilot experiencing an emergency at a typical altitude that light aircraft routinely operate might not be able to establish two-way contact with the relevant ATSU, except with the assistance of an airborne relay.

Also, a reminder; relays can be equally important on non-emergency frequencies.

## **INSTRUMENT APPROACHES IN CLASS 'G' AIRSPACE**

**This report was also published in the most recent GA FEEDBACK newsletter.**

**Report Text:** I would like to highlight a problem flying the instrument approach at XXX that has occurred to me on more than one occasion. Outside the ATZ the instrument approach is in the open FIR (i.e. in uncontrolled airspace). Although marked on the VFR charts as having an instrument approach on both ends of the hard runway, this fact seems to be missed by many pilots.

On several occasions I have witnessed pilots flying through the instrument approach track quite oblivious to its presence and recently I had to take over control from my student to take avoiding action, in the base turn, against a large twin engine aircraft. The approach track orientation is roughly North - South, but the position of the airfield leads to most passing traffic going East - West or vice-versa. On this particular occasion the

transiting aircraft chose to fly at exactly the height of the base turn procedure. I had to roll out of the turn on an easterly heading and let the aircraft pass before continuing the turn to intercept the final approach track. The conflicting aircraft was most likely to have been flown by a commercial pilot (due to the size). Luckily we were in good VMC at the time and avoidance was not too much of a problem.

The aerodrome has no radar so we were under a procedural service at the time with a conspicuity code on the transponder. Whether or not the other aircraft was in communication with any ATC unit I do not know, but they certainly did not contact the aerodrome in question. The local LARS providers may have been in communication, but not necessarily providing a separation service at the time. Although we are all obliged to maintain a vigilant lookout at all times, flying an instrument approach is always going to compromise this somewhat.

Is there more that could be done to publicise instrument approaches that project into uncontrolled airspace and provide would-be transiting aircraft a safe crossing procedure? Remaining well clear would be a good option, but there may be others. However, this does still rely on the pilot being aware of the instrument approach in the first place. Improved awareness of such instrument procedures and encouraging pilots to contact the relevant aerodrome ATC for information regarding the activity of the instrument approach would be a start.

This has the potential to become more of a problem due to the restricted airspace in place around the Olympics forcing aircraft into a narrow corridor abeam the aerodrome. Please read your map carefully!

Lessons Learned: I shall maintain my vigilant lookout during an instrument approach, although this is rather difficult in actual IMC! Request that pilots know what the row of chevrons pointing at an aerodrome on a chart mean. Make an RT call to an aerodrome early when intending to pass by, even if it is at some distance, when the said aerodrome has the chevron markings and your track goes through them.

**CHIRP Comment:** As the reporter notes, airfields with one or more instrument approaches outside Controlled Airspace are annotated on aeronautical charts by a chevron/cone symbol; the symbol is aligned to the main instrument runway but does not mean that instrument approaches will always be in the direction of the cone. Two chevrons indicate two or more instrument approaches.

It is important for pilots and/or instructors, who carry out IFR approaches in Class 'G' airspace, to remember that the principle of 'See and avoid' continues to apply and no priority is afforded to an aircraft carrying out a practice (or actual) instrument approach in Class 'G' airspace. Thus, it is a legal requirement to maintain a visual lookout throughout the approach procedure and if necessary to give way to other aircraft in accordance with the Rules of the Air.

If you plan to transit close to such an airfield, it is strongly recommended that you establish RTF contact with the Air Traffic Services Unit when within 10nm of

the airfield to. (See Legend Notes - CAA 1:500,000 and 1:250,000 Aeronautical Charts)

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## ASRs - ELECTRONIC FILING

**Report Text:** My company has recently introduced electronic filing of ASRs and has discontinued accepting paper submissions. As usual the crew's opinions were not listened to before this was done and our predictions as to the impracticality of this system are now all too clear.

The problem is that previously ASRs would usually be written in flight when time permitted and the detail was fresh. Now we have to wait for the end of a flight duty, which is usually long, and remain in the crew room past our post-flight duty allowance laboriously fighting through a badly implemented computer programme that refuses to accept the report if any of the myriad of "required" fields are not filled in. The time this all takes beyond a long duty when tired and wanting to go home means that often only the reports that cannot be ignored are being filed and the great majority, the useful background and "for info" type of reports, are simply not being done at all. Indeed, there is anecdotal evidence that even some of the more serious reports are being skipped too.

Of course the scale of this is only my personal observation and I could be wrong, but is the CAA looking at the levels of reporting in terms of volume and detail, and is it happy with the reduction in reporting that this new system appears to have caused. Can this exercise in reducing a minimal bureaucratic admin task in the office in fact be justified as a valid procedure from the flight safety aspect? Adding ever longer and more onerous duties to pilots to save admin in the office is not the way ahead.

**CHIRP Comment:** Electronic methods of filing Air Safety Reports/Mandatory Occurrence Reports (ASRs/MORs) offer significant benefits to organisations, as the administration burden associated with hard copy reporting systems is considerable and often involves conversion to an electronic format at some stage in the process. However, some current methods of electronic reporting have limitations, such as those described above, that operators sometimes appear reluctant to address.

Reporting systems that require the report to be compiled electronically at the end of a flight duty period (FDP) impose an additional post-flight company task on the reporter that may not be accounted for in the calculation of duty/rest; this is particularly relevant when the method of data entry is not user friendly. Also, when an occurrence happens early in a multi-sector FDP, there is a risk that there will be a loss of relevant detailed information in a report compiled at the end of an FDP or, as the reporter suggests, the occurrence may not be reported.

In contrast, the investment in a system that permits flight crew the ability to record electronically an occurrence during an FDP and to transfer ASR/MOR report data, again electronically, at the end of the FDP provides an effective solution to both parties.

## **METARS - WIND REPORTING**

**Report Text:** Why are METAR winds given in relation to TRUE North and not MAGNETIC North?

Why would a pilot want to know the wind at an airport in TRUE?

Before the wind has any relevance it has to be converted to MAGNETIC so that the relation to the runways can be assessed. Who wants to know the TRUE wind? Please can CHIRP find out who these guys are and let us pilots know?

The only use for a TRUE wind is possibly when it needs to be plotted on a chart that is oriented to TRUE north. When would a pilot need to do that these days? Is the representation of METAR winds in TRUE format a hangover from some bygone age? If there is a need for TRUE winds I suggest that winds be recorded in the following format. -270T16I280M16 showing both the TRUE and MAGNETIC values.

This would keep everyone happy whoever the TRUE guys are! Don't forget to let us know.

**CHIRP Comment:** The following information has been provided courtesy of the UK Meteorological Authority:

All METARs (and wind information in a TAF) are provided in Degrees True North, whereas all reports provided by ATC, including those on ATIS, are provided in Degrees Magnetic North.

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) an agency of the United Nations in conjunction with ICAO set the standards by which meteorological observations are made. All observations that are used by meteorologists are provided in relation to Degrees True North; in many States the observation system that is used to provide the routine weather observations is also used to provide the METAR. There have been a number of discussions within ICAO on the relative merits of Degrees True vs Degrees Magnetic. However such a change would require modifications to wind reporting systems around the world, many of which are fully automated.

Work is in progress to develop a system that will allow users much greater flexibility in the format of weather information they receive; rather than just being able to receive coded weather reports as at present the user will in the future have a number of options including Degrees True or Degrees Magnetic. However, the introduction of such a system is several years away.

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## **CALL SIGN CONCERNS**

**Report Text:** The subject of aircraft call signs is something that bothers and at times angers me considerably.

Air Traffic's job is stressful enough and some airlines do little to help where call signs are concerned. It angers me when we are allocated long and sometimes tongue twister call signs. I have written to our Operations and expressed my concern here but got little response. I have even heard ATC saying, "You guys and your pesky call signs". Before the recession

there were times on various sectors when the ATC were working to maximum capacity. On one particular occasion the controller was working so hard that no one was able to check in. The controller was like a machine-gun on rapid fire issuing instructions to all the aircraft on the frequency, having made the assumption that the aircraft were in fact listening out, having not been able to check in. The controller's ability to keep the show on the go was outstanding but it did bother both of us considerably because if someone had uttered the words 'Mayday' the whole thing would have fallen apart with disastrous consequences.

Why is it necessary to have such long call signs? "XYZ International" for example, can't they be encouraged to drop 'International'. Although things have temporarily eased with the slight dip in movements during the current recession, I have no doubt that when we fly out of the other side the problem will still be there.

Why do call signs have 4 digits in them? Often there is a conflicting call sign registered and so the Airline Ops then files a 4 digit alpha numeric call sign - sometimes repeating the letter (e.g. ###26GG). What's with the GG? Why can't it be simply 26G thereby reducing the time communicating with ATC? Several operators have hundreds of 4 digit alpha-numeric call signs - can't they be persuaded to drop one digit?

Having shorter precise call signs would free up air time that is congested with long and sometimes cumbersome call signs. I know some airlines use the flight number for the call sign but it is easy enough to file a new, shorter and above all SAFER call sign than the ones we use at the moment.

I challenge you to have a listen to the Dover sector, for example, at rush hour in the evening and you'll see (hear) what I mean. Please can the airlines be mandated to use as shorter call sign as they can to make everyone's life easier and above all SAFER!

**CHIRP Comment:** Considerable efforts have been made in recent years to simplify and deconflict aircraft callsigns. This work has been led by Eurocontrol with the participation of both Air Navigation Service Providers such as NATS and airline representatives.

The co-ordinated approach to deconflicting callsigns within Europe is managed by the Eurocontrol Call Sign Similarity Management Cell (E-mail: [cfmu.csmc@eurocontrol.int](mailto:cfmu.csmc@eurocontrol.int)) and has brought about a significant reduction in the number of callsign confusion events, which in 2009 totalled more than 500 in the UK alone.

In the UK CAA (DAP) is responsible for the Policy for the Assignment and Use of Telephone Designators [AIC 97/2008 (Yellow 278) refers]; the day-to-day process is managed by NATS.

Internationally, all callsign pre-fixes are registered with ICAO and studies have shown that alphanumeric callsigns offer the best protection against confusion.

Currently, overflight clearances require six months advance notice and also require the same flight identification to be used as that submitted in the overflight request (i.e. the flight schedule number). This practice is currently under consideration by Eurocontrol.

It is worth remembering that correct RT phraseology and good RT discipline are important in preventing call sign confusion occurrences.

#### Civil Aviation Authority

The following Safety Notices have been issued since January 2012 and can be accessed via the Publications Section of the CAA Website [www.caa.co.uk](http://www.caa.co.uk):

Number:

2012/005 - Issued 13 April 2012

Laser Attacks

2012/006 - Issued 27 April 2012

Aerodrome Emergency Alerting Procedures

2012/008 - Issued 11 May 2012

2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games

2012/009 - Issued 23 May 2012

Radiotelephony Phraseology

2012/011 - Issued 13 June 2012

Low Fuel Holding Procedures

2012/012 - Issued 15 June 2012

Revised Intro of VFR at Night in the UK

2012/013 - Issued 29 June 2012

Carriage of Guide/Assistance Dogs in the Cabin

#### Civil Aviation Authority

##### INFORMATION NOTICES

Details of recently issued Information Notices are published on the CHIRP website at [www.chirp.co.uk](http://www.chirp.co.uk)

If you wish to contact the CAA Flight Operations Inspectorate or to report any safety matter which is outside the scope of the MOR Scheme please e-mail the CAA at:

[flightoperationssafety@caa.co.uk](mailto:flightoperationssafety@caa.co.uk)

## CABIN CREW REPORTS

### TAXIING SPEEDS

**Report Text:** During taxi, the safety demonstration was being played and cabin crew were in their demonstration positions. The aircraft was travelling at a speed that, when cornering, crew members had to hold on to the seat backs to remain upright.

During the cruise the First Officer came out of the flight deck briefly and confirmed that the Captain had been in control during the taxi/take-off and that the aircraft had been taxiing at approximately 40mph at times.

I feel this is excessive, particularly when cornering as cabin crew were being thrown around the cabin and found it difficult to negotiate the aisle.

**CHIRP Comment:** It is acknowledged that many operators' Flight Data Monitoring programmes include taxi speed as one parameter and 'flag' occasions when the taxi speed exceeds the operator's maximum recommended value.

However, this report serves as a reminder that during turns a significantly higher lateral acceleration is generated in the rear cabin of many aircraft types than is apparent on the flight deck, placing unsecured cabin crew still completing their before take-off checks at risk of injury

## Address Changes

If you receive FEEDBACK as a licensed pilot/ATCO/maintenance engineer please notify Personnel Licensing at the CAA of your change of address in writing and not CHIRP.

A Change of Address form is available to download from the CAA website at:

[www.caa.co.uk/docs/175/srg\\_fcl\\_changeofaddress.pdf](http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/175/srg_fcl_changeofaddress.pdf)

Post / Fax to:

Civil Aviation Authority  
Personnel Licensing Department  
Licensing Operations  
Aviation House  
Gatwick Airport South  
West Sussex RH6 0YR  
Fax: 01293 573996

Alternatively, you can e-mail your change of address to the following relevant department (please remember to include your licence number):

Flight Crew..... [fclweb@caa.co.uk](mailto:fclweb@caa.co.uk)

ATCO/FISO..... [ats.licensing@caa.co.uk](mailto:ats.licensing@caa.co.uk)

Maintenance Engineer..... [eldweb@caa.co.uk](mailto:eldweb@caa.co.uk)

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