

Air Transport FEEDBACK



Edition 136 - October 2020

Editorial

Although there's been an overall reduction in flying over the summer due to COVID-19, the reporting of safety issues to CHIRP has continued, albeit with many concerns being focused on job security, redundancy programmes and mental health issues. CHIRP cannot engage directly in issues involving industrial relations, but we do have a legitimate interest in mental health and safety concerns brought on by stress and distraction. Our first report in this edition speaks to these issues and serves as a proxy for many others that we have received. Although the CAA is similarly constrained by employment law in some respects, they've assured CHIRP that they've been actively engaged with the airlines throughout the summer to stress the compound risks that may be building up. But there is a wider picture that we also need to be aware of, and to which all parts of the aviation system are part of the problem. The convergence of major changes in operating procedures due to COVID-19 requirements; potentially weaker than normal oversight within the regulator and company safety systems due to staff being dispersed and working remotely; numerous engineering, operating and financial challenges through reduced schedules and aircraft utilisation; and low morale within the workforce, all point towards elevated risk within the system that must be properly recognised and mitigated. The ICAO Doc9859 (Safety Management Manual - SMM) talks about the 'safety space' between efficient/effective operations and safety so that output is balanced with acceptable risk. It goes on to say that the basic defences are training, appropriate

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technology, effective oversight and internal processes and procedures that support such oversight. The very next part of the SMM discusses 'change management' and acknowledges that hazards may inadvertently be introduced into the aviation system whenever change occurs. It seems to me that the 'safety space' is very much at risk of becoming squeezed in the next few months, and so we all need to be meticulous in ensuring that any new procedures and changes are properly reviewed before implementing new practises.

On top of all of that, we're rapidly approaching winter in the UK and Europe, and so the extra considerations of cold weather operations also have to be factored into the COVID-19 'new normal' for many. No doubt well-rehearsed in cold weather operations in previous times, the prospect of operating with reduced levels of currency, new social-distancing and operating regimes, and dark, miserable weather conditions all add another level of complexity to the 'managing change' calculation for all those involved in the operation, be they flight crew, cabin crew, engineers, controllers or ground-handling staff. There's lots of scope for errors and mistakes to mount up as folk are 'nibbled to death by ducks' as they cope with cumulative pressures that, in themselves, would otherwise be easily handled individually.

Here at *CHIRP* we don't always manage to achieve resolution of issues in a timely fashion due to external factors and the need to respect individual and company confidentiality issues. One such issue that has been long running at *CHIRP* has been reports of problems with life jackets for helicopter pilots operating over the North Sea. The issue has centred on the potential for current life jackets to cause neck injuries resulting from routine wear, and there are many factors that have influenced the debate. Although we've not been able to formally report the specifics in a *CHIRP* FEEDBACK due to ongoing legal processes, we've pursued the issue with the relevant Company and Regulator in the background (both of whom have been receptive to *CHIRP*'s engagement), and the Company are actively exploring other options. So, even if it sometimes seems that little progress is being made, or you think that it's likely that nothing can be done so there's no point reporting, the opposite is true; although we can't always formally report on outcomes and specifics due to confidentiality, please do continue to report – because nothing will change if you don't.

Finally, it is with great regret that I have to say goodbye to Terry Dudley, our Deputy Director Engineering, who has had to stand down from *CHIRP* duties due to pressure of work in his 'day job'. Terry has been an enthusiastic supporter of *CHIRP* as a Board member for many years, and a stalwart member of the *CHIRP* team as Deputy Director Engineering for the last two. My huge thanks go out to him for his work both with my predecessor and me, especially as I was learning the ropes in the last few months – you'll be much missed Terry (but I'm hoping you'll still be able to attend Board meetings in an advisory role nonetheless so it won't be a complete goodbye!). Terry is succeeded by Phil Young, another well-established Board member who has agreed to take on the role of Engineering Programme Manager (retitled to reflect the part-time nature of the role) – more from Phil below. Whilst I'm on the topic of personnel changes, Stephanie Dykes, our Cabin Crew Programme Manager, is heading off on maternity leave at the end of October, and Jennifer Curran is in the process of taking over the role in Stef's absence. Also, we've recruited Rupert Dent as our newly installed Drone/UAS Programme Manager on a part-time basis, and he will be developing our drone programme in the coming months. So, all change at *CHIRP* with a completely new team settling in – no pressure..!

Steve Forward, Director Aviation

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Engineering Editorial

Time really does fly. It only seems like a couple of months ago that I took on the Deputy Director Engineering position with *CHIRP*, but two years have passed and my time at the helm is now over. I have had a very enjoyable time doing what I could to help identify and inform on Human Factors issues for Engineers. I would like to thank Ian Dugmore for giving me the opportunity in the first instance and for the support he has given me. I would also like to thank Steve and Stef for all the support they have given me and of course all the members of the Advisory board for their support, comments and criticism, all equally welcome I assure you. I will still participate as a member of the Board as much as possible but, as you can appreciate, the aviation industry is proving very challenging for those lucky enough to still have a role to perform at this time. I now need to focus on

my own career as we all try and overcome the impact of COVID-19 on aviation and look to rebuild and reshape the industry for the future benefit of all. With that, I would now like to hand over to Phil Young and wish him every success in the role. I am very confident he will do a great job.

Terry Dudley, Deputy Director Engineering (now retired!)

I would like to begin my first editorial by warmly thanking Terry Dudley for his work as Deputy Director Engineering for the past two years and also for his handover to me, as his replacement, in the renamed position of Engineering Programme Manager. I feel very flattered to have been asked to work part-time for *CHIRP*. I am looking forward to the role very much and am especially pleased to be continuing in a position where safety is the *raison d'être*.

I retired in December 2019 after 49 years in aircraft engineering having started as an apprentice in manufacturing (Concorde, Brooklands). I worked at Heathrow twice, for a total of 27 years, firstly on corporate jets (Hawker Siddeley HS125) then RB-211 engine overhaul, and then with two international airlines, holding Certificate of Release to Service (CRS) for the B737 Classic under a UK CAA Section L converting to an EASA Licence. During my second stint at Heathrow, I held CRS on the B777 and B747-Classic, under a foreign licence. For a season, I was on the Heathrow Airport committee for de-icing best practice. I then worked at Farnborough, (HS-125 again), then contracting in Kuala Lumpur, Subang, on B737 Majors. Next contracting in Frankfurt, on Boeing and Airbus narrow and wide body casualty. I had three periods with a Maintenance Repair Organisation (MRO) at Lasham Hants, contracting then later inspecting B737 Majors, which included a short secondment to Southend, and lastly as Quality Engineer, with a short secondment to RAF St Athan. Finally, I changed to another MRO back at Farnborough, as a Quality Engineer, again with Corporate jets; Hawker, Dassault & Bombardier.

Needless to say, fourteen years in Quality involved auditing at home and overseas; liaising with a great many Surveyors/National Aviation Authority (NAA) Inspectors of various nationalities; instructing, compiling and conducting examinations (both written and oral); authorisation issue; and also Maintenance Error Decision Aid (MEDA) investigations, to mention but a handful of duties. I have had to get involved in the regulations of approximately twelve different States of Registry. As a result, I think it important for engineers not to think of *CHIRP* as a "G-reg" publication, when so many of us work in the UK on aircraft from the rest of the world, and whose *CHIRP* reports will contribute to the experience of us all. My experience has given me a wide knowledge and understanding of engineering staff problems, which will be invaluable in my *CHIRP* duties.

Finally, not just because *CHIRP* received a Flight Crew report in reference to de-icing procedures, earlier in the year but, as a quick reminder, we are of course, approaching the period of Cold Weather Ops, where we will be thinking about things like spectrometer readings for fluid mixture, hold-over times and touchy-feely, physical inspections (wherever possible) for contamination. The inspections before and after de-icing are as important as any other inspection required to be carried out. They should not be delegated to the un-trained. The hold-over decision is based on a serious and accurate assessment of prevailing weather conditions - Freezing Fog, for example, is not just a foggy day when you feel freezing cold, it shows physically when vertical surfaces start to accumulate ice (Rime Ice). Engineers making entries in the Tech Log must take responsibility; therefore, check the mixture, or at the very least the certification that the supplier compiles with when filling the equipment.

Phil Young, Engineering Programme Manager

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Comments on Previous FEEDBACKs

No Comments!

We received no comments about the last edition of FEEDBACK, which means that either nobody read it, or nobody had any thoughts or suggestions. Here at *CHIRP* we very much value your inputs and comments, good or bad, because we recognise that we certainly don't have all the answers or good ideas. We're sure that there are plenty of people out there who will have something to say, so please do get in touch at mail@chirp.co.uk and let us know what you think about any of the issues that we've included in this edition, or anything else (that's safety related) regarding what's included!

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Reports

Report No.1 - Pressure to Operate Under Stressful Circumstances

Report Text: [Airline] announced a surprise redundancy consultation and we are getting emails mentioning these job losses, pay cuts and changes to terms and conditions whilst flight crew are still being pressured to operate; normal flights are still operating, and pressure is being applied if you go sick or are not fit to fly. If a pilot feels they're too stressed to operate given the current situation then they shouldn't operate, and no pressure should be applied. They should not feel like they should have to operate due to the threat of redundancy hanging over them where sickness is likely to be one of the parameters used to get rid of employees.

CHIRP Comment: This report is included as just one example of the many that we received this summer from flight crew who were concerned about operating aircraft whilst under the threat of redundancy. The airline concerned was not alone in sending out consultation letters, most of the other airlines did the same in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic as they restructured their operations and made unpalatable decisions to ensure a sustainable future. As a result, it seems that most flight crew received information about potential job losses, pay cuts and other changes, and this is something that we also saw happening in recent years in the North Sea oil industry during the downturn there. It's very unsettling to get such letters, but it's a necessary part of the formal process that companies have to go through. As a result, with all flight crew required to receive such letters as part of any redundancy process, there were inevitably some who were continuing to fly against that backdrop.

The resulting turbulence and uncertainty for flight crews means that it will come as no surprise to hear that *CHIRP* therefore had multiple reports about the redundancy programmes of more than one operator in the last few months. All of them focused on the morale, mental health and pressures on flight crew in the context of the safety aspects of continued flying whilst under the threat of redundancy, and also the criteria for how redundancies were to be decided. *CHIRP* certainly has great empathy with their concerns, and the fact that people are still flying when under such pressures and anxieties is obviously cause for unease. The risk from distraction and anxiety is self-evident, and it takes real leadership and personal resilience from all to lift the crews to focus on the task in hand when operating.

Although *CHIRP* cannot engage in specific industrial disputes, the CAA was contacted to ensure that these concerns were highlighted in a generic way, and they responded that they were acutely aware of the safety impact that redundancy discussions can have, and are regularly in contact with all the major operators to focus on how they can manage this appropriately in a fair and safe manner for the employees. The issue of companies using sickness as a redundancy measure was also raised with the CAA; mental health welfare from such stress meant that flight crew should be reporting sick if necessary but it was reported to them that some flight crew were not doing so for fear of that being used against them. The CAA commented that they were also alive to this issue and had been engaging with companies to discourage the use of sickness in the current circumstances as a measure for redundancy. As part of this engagement, CAA said that they have written to all the 'Nominated Persons Flight Operations' for UK AOCs to highlight the compound risks and, in relation to this specific issue, one of the CAA's immediate concerns was crew fitness to fly from a mental health perspective due to the current situation.

Our FEEDBACK Edition 135 editorial was specifically targeted at this issue to encourage all in the aviation world to be alert to the associated stresses of flying when under threat of redundancy, and to ensure that those who were severely affected knew that facilities such as Company and independent P-PAN (Peer-Pilot Assistance Network) and Aviation Psychologists were increasingly available and should be accessed at an early stage in order to provide help in a timely manner. At the risk of repetition, the not-for-profit International Flight Safety Foundation (of which the independent UK Flight Safety Committee is part), have produced '[An Aviation Professional's Guide to Wellbeing](#)' about mental health – well worth a look through to reflect on personal stresses and to read some thoughts on how to help cope.

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Report No.2 - Readability of Documents

Report Text: I have been a civil controller for nearly 30 years now and the go-to guide for ATCOs has always been CAP493/MATS Pt1. In recent years, the quality of the instructions written in amendments has become non-user-friendly. In the past it was always a clearly written, in plain English, rule book for ATCOs to access. If there were disputes about rules or for clarifying points with other ATCOs and trainees, then this is the book we would turn to.

Over the last couple of years, it can clearly be seen that the authors have changed the way they write instructions, and not for the better. Nearly every rewrite of CAP493 or amendments are accompanied within the text by reference points from wherever the rule originated. It makes for very awkward reading and now resembles an ATC version of the ANO. In the past, we would get the rule in plain English without the references. I would imagine that those very same references were received by the CAA, then interpreted into a rule and published for the benefit of the ATCOs. Only this morning we received another CAA amendment for the weather criteria for determining VFR. Again, the new amendment had so many references pasted all over it, it was confusing. This rule looked like it had been copied and pasted from another document. The most annoying thing about this revised rule was that they quoted vertical distance from cloud in metres with feet in brackets. In the UK we don't determine vertical distances of any kind in metres, we use feet, as do the rest of Europe. Please, CAA, can we stick to convention, it's just more numbers we may need to recall for no reason.

The other point I have to raise is the style of the writing. We now frequently encounter new or revised rules that are so verbose as to make the rule unreadable or, worse, ambiguous. A perfect recent example of this is the new rules for controlling in Class E airspace. I was part of a small team trying to interpret what the new rules, as written in the amendment, actually meant. This took weeks of work to try and decipher what the author had written. Even then, the CAA had to be questioned as to their meaning on a few occasions. This is not a great state of affairs to be in, where 3 very qualified individuals could take different interpretations from the same badly written rule. Now multiply this up to multiple ATCOs and all the different units needing to apply those same rules.

I also read the consultation document the CAA had sent to various airspace users throughout the country. They were given 4 options for controlling in Class E airspace. I took a couple of days to read all the detailed responses from other airspace users and the one thing that stood out was that the CAA or author had a preferred option and every respondent throughout the country disagreed with the CAA's option. Which one did we end up with? The author's!

Please, whoever writes the revisions to the CAP493, go back to plain English instructions. Those references are there for you to produce a rule for ATCOs to use. We are not solicitors.

CAA Comments: In the past, the CAA has been challenged by EASA in relation to the status of CAPs; in essence, they argued that the CAPs obscured the regulatory requirements placed directly upon ATS providers through EU law. In response, CAA incorporated references where specific requirements were duplicated from the Standardised European Rules of the Air (SERA) and developed the preface text that now appears at the start of many of the CAPs (including the MATS Part 1 (CAP 493)). This CAP preface text clearly describes the requirement of the 'end user' of the CAP to be aware of the requirements contained within the source regulatory materials. As such, acknowledging that in some instances it may have some effect on the readability of the document, it is critical that CAA flag the source regulatory requirements to the end user. CAP493 Supplementary Instruction 2019/07 provides some additional information on this issue.

Before the advent of Reg (EU) No 923/2012 Standardised European Rules of the Air (SERA), the MATS Part 1 (CAP493) was the UK's means of adopting those ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) and Procedures for Air Navigation Services (PANS) relating to air traffic services (ATS). As ICAO SARPs and PANS have no legislative status, in discharging our obligations set out by the CAA (Chicago Convention) Directions 2007, the CAA either proposes their adoption into law, or incorporates them into Civil Aviation Publications; for example, the MATS Part 1. As such, in the past, there was no requirement to provide detailed references to the source material. The advent of EU laws relating to ATS, that are directly applicable within the UK, meant that a change in stance was required. Whilst CAPs may duplicate requirements detailed within EU law (CAP493 includes many examples from SERA), it is the law that takes precedence.

In response to the reporter's specific points, the CAA has not directly received any similar comments about the amendments becoming non-user-friendly since the publication of MATS Pt 1 Edition 7 (Dec 17). Class E procedure-related changes to MATS Pt1 were developed with industry input, and no issues were specifically raised in relation to this. That said, when some long-standing text was relocated within the CAP, comments were received claiming this was new content. The majority of stakeholders supported one option over the CAA's preferred option. However, when balancing all consultation responses, the CAA concluded that its preferred option, together with material to remind pilots of their responsibilities within Class E airspace, was operationally the optimal way forward.

As regards the future, the CAA and DfT are developing a UK Policy Development and Implementation process that will replace the immediate adoption into law that Implementing Regulations had under the EU and EASA. Under the Withdrawal Act Bill, all EU law applicable and in force on 31 December 2020 will become retained law in UK legislation, modified to make it 'operable'. Future changes to EU Regulations and new EU Regulations will be considered under this new process, as will the adoption into UK legislation and policy of amendments to ICAO SARPs and PANS. Part of the process will be to look at the impact assessment of incorporating rule changes and to assign an appropriate priority to their adoption. This process is still under development.

One consideration is that other domains, such as Licensing, Airworthiness and Flight Operations, transitioned to the 'Rule, Acceptable Means of Compliance (AMC) and Guidance Material' regulatory structure many years ahead of ATM, and they will maintain this structure in the future. The EU had almost completed the transition of ATM to this structure with the adoption into law of Reg (EU) No 2017/373 the 'ATM/ANS IR' (amended by Regulation Reg (EU) No 2020/469), and the CAA engaged with air navigation service providers, through our ATM/ANS IR Industry Consultative Group, on the implications of these changes for the UK. In the future, as part of the implementation of the new UK policy process, the UK will seek to adopt a consistent regulatory structure across all domains.

CHIRP Comment: The reporter's main point is that they worry that the important messages in CAPs are being obscured by distracting references to the legal sources. It's a hard one for CAA to balance, and CHIRP absolutely understands that the regulator has to ensure the veracity of the statements and signpost the associated legalese. But this is not the only report that CHIRP has received about the content of CAA CAPs, so there's something to be said for trying to make them as user-friendly as possible. Overall, the Board had sympathy with the reporter's view, and controller members agreed that CAP493 had become encumbered by legalese to the extent that it was no longer the easy-reference document that it had been in the past. It was hoped that the UK's imminent departure from the EU as an independent regulator might provide an opportunity for change in the drafting of regulations to make them an easier read given that EASA was governed by European civil law in the drafting of their regulations but the UK would not be once it had departed the EU; there was then scope for UK to draft regulations in its own way.

As a side-issue, the use of digital versus hard-copy versions of reference documents was also discussed by the Board. Although it is sometimes easier to search for material in digital versions, reliance on digital documents is also fraught with problems in that they can sometimes be difficult to locate on the web when in a hurry (particularly EASA documents), whereas hard-copy versions are generally kept in an easily accessible workplace library. In this respect, MATS Part 1 (CAP493) Section 8, Chapter 1, Paragraph 9.1 states that the MATS Part 1 is "to be available for immediate reference at operational control positions", with Paragraph 9.5 stating that "unless otherwise approved by the CAA, [it must] be in a conventional printed form". CHIRP is not aware of any current CAA approvals for MATS Part 1 to be held only in digital rather than printed form.

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Report No.3 - Security and Food

Report Text: I work for a major low-cost carrier based at [Airport]. The subject of crew food and complying with passenger security regulations is a constant source of tension between the security staff and flight crew at this base. Our employer provides us with nothing more than a bottle of water (a basic human right) for rostered duties often in excess of 12hrs and, if a duty-at-airport, a potential 18hrs duty. History is littered with instances of crew becoming unfit while airborne due to low blood-

sugar and other food related issues, it is time this anomaly is addressed with both the relevant government authority and the carriers as a serious flight safety issue.

In the absence of any company provided sustenance, crew bring frozen meals for consumption during their long duty, which are regularly confiscated by security due to the unknown liquid content. The reason given and implied is that the individual concerned could possibly commit an act of terrorism if allowed to proceed with their frozen food and therefore, by implication, must be considered a potential terrorist. However, once the potential threat (food) has been confiscated, unlike potential terrorists from absolutely every other walk of life, we are not detained but allowed to then take control of an aircraft (another potential weapon). Clearly, I would not need any kind of assistance from liquid resources if I wished to commit an act of terrorism, yet this ridiculous practice continues on a day-to-day basis as a flight safety issue.

My company absolutely refuses to provide any kind of nourishment but insist that food is available to buy on board, a simple toasty or snack pack is not enough to sustain somebody for 12 hours or more! This absurd impasse is acknowledged by employees who endeavour to provide their own nourishment but are then thwarted by security regulations. It is time the carriers mitigated the flight safety risk by providing nourishment for longer sectors or the relevant Government Department acknowledges the attendant risk and modifies the rules for flight crew [by allowing the bringing of food through security].

I doubt [Airport] security will shift one degree. As they quite correctly quote 'they don't make the rules, just apply them' and therefore any pressure from [Company] will be met with the same response. This is a flight safety issue, even more so when duties fall apart and enter into substantial discretion resulting in a duty day in excess of 15hrs, or 17hrs since 'substantial' nourishment. Any lobbying or attempt to have the rules applied sensibly or, better still, a dispensation for 'security tested and trusted' aircrew should be directed at the regulatory authority for security rules. In the absence of their understanding and common sense then the next layer should be the airlines showing a 'duty of care' to their employees and supplying reasonable sustenance for duty days - say perhaps in excess of 12hrs. You could take this back to [Company], I for one would be happy to have my sector pay reduced by a few pounds to cover the cost rather than be at the controls of an aircraft getting distracted by hunger.

Company Comment:

Flight Crew Security Procedures. The restrictions on liquids, aerosols and gels were introduced following a failed terrorist plot in 2006, these are worldwide measures required by ICAO Annex 17 and regulated under EU and UK regulations. The threat from Liquids Aerosols and Gels (LAG) remains credible with the threat continually evolving. The UK National Aviation Security Programme (NASP) sets out the requirements for screening of persons other than passengers, this includes the screening of LAGs. Within the current NASP there are only two exceptions to the 100ml LAG rule which apply to aircrew, these are in relation to contact lens solution and anti-bacterial gel (current COVID alleviation). Food items which are considered LAGs are not exempt. There are no restrictions on solid [non-frozen] food items.

The security staff responsible for screening items must ensure they are operating to national requirements to ensure compliance. This applies to staff and passengers, removal of a LAG does not imply, as the reporter suggests, that there are automatic suspicions of terrorism; in the first instance it is to ensure compliance with regulation which is set due to threat intelligence. The main aim of security is to protect aviation from acts of unlawful interference. One of the main threats currently facing the aviation industry today is the "insider threat". This is a person who exploits, or has the intention to exploit, their legitimate access for unauthorised purposes. Thankfully these cases are rare; however, the impact can be catastrophic. Past events demonstrate insider incidents involving aircrew for a variety of motivations; hijack, terrorism and personal gain to name a few. Hence the reason for high standard security screening.

The DfT has issued a temporary amendment to allow staff members to carry certain liquid items into the security restricted area at UK Airports. This has been promulgated to our crews in Operating Staff Instruction (OSI) and states that for drinks and foodstuffs the maximum allowable container size is two litres. This also states categorically that 'frozen liquids and frozen foodstuffs are not permitted' which is giving clear guidance on this matter.

Provision of Food to Flight Crew. As a predominantly short-haul operator, a high number of our duty periods do not exceed 12 hours. The Company is not able to commit to reviewing the provision of meals for longer-duration flights and notes the CAA advice that there is no medical imperative for having a hot meal during a flight period.

CAA AvSec Comment: There is little or no scope for there to be any alleviation of this legislative requirement. JTAC assessment to AvSec and HMG remains that liquid explosives remain a viable threat and they have very little appetite for a reduction in measures surrounding liquids. There is a temporary alleviation in place that allows staff to bring up to 2 litres of liquids into the restricted area, but frozen foodstuffs or frozen liquids are not allowed due to the difficulties that current screening equipment has in dealing with frozen substances.

CHIRP Comment: Although it might seem nugatory to screen flight crew, it is not always possible to positively confirm identity simply because someone is wearing a uniform and a pass – there is potential for credentials to be forged and so, for expediency of screening, security have to apply an overall blanket-approach. Furthermore, given that frozen foods cannot be effectively screened at present, it is reasonable that such items could not be allowed through security. However, no one would deny the importance of flight crew maintaining their blood-sugar at an appropriate level and remaining hydrated. The question is, how to do this when operators do not provide food, and security regulations prohibit some food natures? A similar report was recently discussed by the Board, and flight crew members agreed then, and a member of the CAA medical department confirmed, that cold food (e.g. sandwiches), supplemented by energy bars and other snacks, were an acceptable alternative. In short, there is no medical imperative for having a hot meal during a flight duty period. All that said, *CHIRP* can understand the reporter's frustration at being thwarted from having a hot meal during long duties and, in addition to the blood-sugar issue, it is clear that hunger can be a distraction. As such, although it is up to companies to determine their own terms and conditions for the provision of meals to flight crew during flights, any review of procedures by the Company would be welcomed, and *CHIRP* hopes that a positive outcome might result for their few longer duration flights at least, despite the Company not being able to commit to this at present.

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Report No.4 – Pilot concern over engineer redundancy

Report Text: After finishing a shift we disembarked the aircraft and spoke to the engineer. He mentioned that he had just been made redundant and was understandably upset. He then proceeded to the aircraft to begin his maintenance tasks for the night. Without wishing to cast aspersions on the competence and professionalism of any engineer, I found myself being concerned at the situation. My concern relates chiefly to the mental health and wellbeing of an individual after life-altering news such as redundancy, and the affect it will have on safety critical maintenance tasks. Is it industry practise to dismiss someone and have them continue to look after the maintenance of an aircraft?

The reporter also submitted an ASR through his airline operating company system.

Airline Comment: We are aware of this report and it is logged in our safety system. The location in question is supported by a Maintenance and Repair Organisation (MRO) and, interestingly enough, is not a location impacted by any operational changes by our airline. We have spoken with the MRO about this report, and they have informed us that in fact they are restructuring their presence because of other 3rd-party work. From our perspective, on our return to flying we reactivated our liaison engineers who oversee our operational bases, and [Location] has been visited 3 times since restart. Manning levels are all confirmed as per contract and there have been no reported issues by the engineers on station.

Maintenance and Repair Organisation (MRO) Comment: As a result of the downturn in our industry we have had to make the tough decision to reduce our capacity to align with the reduced demand in load from our customers. All our engineers in the UK were placed at risk of redundancy on 2nd July and, on the 31st July, they were formally informed of the outcome of the consultations. Throughout the process, our emphasis with all our employees was to assess their mental health and wellbeing and advise them of the employee-assist helpline that is an independent confidential

helpline that is provided for them if required. We have received some good feedback from individuals and the trade union on how the process was run.

Post-confirmation to the individuals that had unfortunately been made redundant and served notice on 31st July, we had a few engineers that requested that they continue to work whilst they can, and they and others worked in August to support one of our customers. The rest were placed on furlough, or left on furlough, through their notice period. There are no engineers at work during their notice period now, and no plans to have them back. The engineers that worked were fully assessed and, during conversations with the station managers, if there were any concerns they were stood down - there were a few that felt they could not work, this was accepted, and they were left at home. We monitored the risk throughout the process during the consultation, and managers and HR were present during all meetings, including individual consultations. If any concerns were raised then we discussed and made decisions from this, which led to us removing some out of the workplace. No member of the team was placed under any pressure to work and, if at any time a member of the team felt they weren't in a position that they wanted to attend a shift or more, then this was fully understood and accepted as the safety of them and that of our customers is our top priority. There have been instances where team members have felt under stress, and each of them was given time off until such time as they felt they were in a position to return.

We have a 'STOP' campaign that can be used at any time, and this is promoted and highlighted as part of the refresher induction training that all members of the team receive after returning to work post-furlough. This refresher induction training pack has been put together to ensure that all our engineers are put in the right mindset prior to coming back into work, and the main focus of this training is OSHE (Occupational/Operational Safety, Health, and Environment) and Quality. This has again received good feedback from those that received it after being on furlough for a few months.

We believe that the process was robust. The engineers we are talking about have been in the industry for a long time and, if required, would use the STOP campaign, and a couple did. We don't believe the engineers that did work in August after being informed they were being made redundant were a greater risk than the others.

CHIRP Comment: Firstly, our thanks to the pilot concerned for raising this issue and we commend him for his concern for the engineer's wellbeing. The best people to recognise a colleague with issues that could lead to a related problem are the people they work with, and this report absolutely supports our plea that in these unusual circumstances we all take the time to think about the stresses and pressures that others might be under. During our investigations with the MRO it was noted that all staff working for this organisation were placed at 'Risk of Redundancy' in July, but that no staff members were actually made redundant until August, which means that the individual concerned in this report was in the same position as all of his colleagues by being 'at risk' but not actually redundant at the time the report was submitted. Regardless of occupation, the process of redundancy is the same, and staff must be put 'at risk' at the start of the formal process of consultation and selection; not to do so can have consequences for the company concerned. In this instance, it was clear that the MRO did their utmost to manage the Human Factors implications by putting things in place to monitor and support staff. CHIRP also discussed this report with the airline concerned, who had received their own safety report on which they conducted their own investigation. As a result, they also mitigated the possible risk through increased oversight of the MRO at a point in time when all airlines were trying to cut back on expenditure. None of us want to see staff being made redundant but it is a fact of life, and this report highlights to all engineering managers that such activities need careful management of both the human and safety aspects, and that this can be done in an empathetic, safe and compliant manner. Our thanks are due to both the Airline and MRO involved for their openness during this investigation of the report.

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Report No.5 - Transition Altitude

Report Text: I was a flight instructor (FI) on an IR training flight. This was my first flight as an FI teaching IR. We were routing to Blackpool (BPL) for an approach and were told to climb "to altitude 4000ft" entering the BPL hold where the Transition Altitude (TA) is 3000ft. After [subsequent] departure [from Blackpool *en route* Liverpool], we were given "ESTRY DCT WAL" climbing "FL040". On the ESTRY-WAL leg, we called Liverpool for a Traffic Service and join at WAL. Liverpool were

slow to give a clearance. Due to being busy teaching, I got caught out by how quickly we approached the Manchester TMA (MTMA), base altitude 3500ft. I rapidly descended, with Liverpool asking for a Mode C check. I reported passing altitude 2900ft when Liverpool queried the Mode C which was showing 2200ft. My student then spotted that we were on 1013, not the QNH of 989 hPa (which we had not yet been given by Liverpool). We corrected this and levelled off at 1800ft, almost at MSA. This was an error on my part, however Blackpool ATC also added to the confusion by having a seemingly variable TA. I will ensure to brief more thoroughly on airspace, but I believe this should be followed up with Blackpool ATC and maybe Liverpool ATC. Blackpool and Warton both publish a TA of 3000ft; however, I asked Warton when I went to visit why they regularly give descent “to altitude 4000ft”. The response was that because they are under the MTMA, they use the TA of the MTMA. This isn’t published anywhere.

Blackpool ATC Comment: CHIRP contacted Blackpool ATC to gain their perspective on the allocation of altitudes versus flight levels and also the issue of TA definition and use. Blackpool responded by noting that clearances to join controlled airspace given to IFR pilots routing towards the MTMA are generated by the controlled airspace’s service provider and simply relayed by Blackpool ATC. It is for that receiving agency to determine whether a FL or altitude is specified, and this is based on both aircraft activity in and around their airspace and the transiting pilot’s intentions when entering their airspace. Whilst routing towards Liverpool, Blackpool will coordinate with Warton to determine a suitable initial altitude or FL for the transiting aircraft, and this will be influenced by the nature of traffic in the Warton pattern, which can be particularly busy. Blackpool has no radar, and so Warton generally takes the lead in suggesting coordinated altitudes or FLs. In the circumstances of this case, the preferred procedure by Liverpool would be to use 4000ft QNH if possible but they may elect to specify FL40 to ensure separation against other traffic operating above their TA (amongst other operational reasons).

With respect to the harmonisation of TAs in the area, Blackpool ATC considers that there would be clear advantages to Blackpool, Warton and the MTMA having a common TA because this would then remove the need for pilots and controllers to decide whether QNH or FLs were used in these circumstances. This is a wider debate than just Blackpool’s preference, but they would willingly support engagement with the CAA, Warton, Manchester and Liverpool in order to enable such a change.

CAA Airspace Regulation Comment: A change to the TA used by Blackpool and Warton in order to harmonise with the MTMA TA would be subject to the Airspace Change Proposal process but this is a scalable process such that straight-forward changes in a small area could be fairly easily enacted based on the assessed impacts of the proposal. A change sponsor can present an argument to the CAA outlining the limited impact and, if the CAA accepts their argument, then the process of enacting the change (often the consultation phase) can be scaled down appropriately. Blackpool and Warton (supported by Manchester and Liverpool if they agree there’s a problem) could decide to sponsor such a change in order to mitigate infringements of the MTMA.

CHIRP Comment: As the reporter acknowledges themselves, preparation and thorough briefing is the key when delivering training and instructional flights in complex airspace and, fortunately in this case, the pilots noticed their error in advance of any infringement and were able to correct the situation, albeit at the last minute. Looking beyond the lessons to be learnt about the distractions that can arise when monitoring/instructing students, the airspace issues regarding adjacent airfields with differing TAs are a trap for the unwary. TA in UK Class G airspace is normally 3000ft (except where the Class G airspace underlies low level CTAs – to mitigate infringements), but the busier TMAs use higher TAs in order to integrate IFR departures on the same pressure datum as inbounds descending out of stacks. A higher, harmonised UK-national TA has been the subject of numerous debates and initiatives over the years, and much work was done from 2010 until 2015/16 to try to progress towards this but concerns over cost-benefit ultimately led to the project stalling and being placed under ‘care and maintenance’ pending further consultation (see [CAP1349](#) and [CAP1417](#)). At a local level, the initiation of an ACP to harmonise the TA in this area may appear daunting but, if all stakeholders agree the benefits, it seems that a scaled-down process could be reasonably straight-forward and yield positive safety benefits.

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Report No.6 - Unattended Baggage Concerns

Report Text: [Airport] employs a Customer Experience Team to interact with and assist customers at various touchpoints on their journey through arrivals and departures. One of the "roles" of these team members is to attend calls for unattended luggage both landside and airside. Most of the time, such bags are "assessed" as not a threat and removed by the team member to the airport lost property provider where they are x-rayed before being stored.

The airport has an on-site police presence, many of whom are not engaged in anything going on at the time of an unattended bag call being made. They also have teams of in excess of 100 security officers whose role is airport security and baggage screening. The training provided for the Customer Experience Team regarding unattended bags is negligible in terms of content or responsibility. I believe that dealing with potential explosives is not in the remit or experience of this team, and the procedure should fall to trained airport security personnel and/or the police force.

In line with the unattended bags policy, [Airport] suffers extensively from "sleepers." These are passengers who arrive at the Airport Terminal far too far in advance of their flight check-in time during the evening before. We then suffer with sometimes hundreds of people sleeping nightly on the floor. All these passengers have baggage with them for checking in or taking on-board an aircraft. Whilst these passengers are asleep, they are not watching their baggage and there is a huge potential for baggage to be interfered with whilst they are not awake and watching it. I feel the airport does not take its security seriously and, rather than deal with the sleepers issue, allow it to continue and also it does not make adequate provision for security-trained staff to deal with unattended items that are a threat to the terminal or an aircraft.

All the above is a daily occurrence. I would appreciate you keeping my report anonymous from the organisation as I believe it proliferates a culture that "your card is marked" or you are laughed at for raising safety concerns. There is no ownership of these things and all that happens is you get told "to fill in a form."

Airport Security Compliance Comments: The airport takes its security obligations seriously and complies with all legal and regulatory requirements. We are also subject to regular independent safety and security audits and inspections. All Landside areas are routinely patrolled by security personnel and high visibility police including the use of Project Servator which aims to deter, detect and disrupt a range of criminal activity, including terrorism, while providing a reassuring presence for the public. Extensive CCTV is also in operation to provide an additional layer of security. Regarding unattended baggage, there is a fully documented procedure in place, including escalation where an item is deemed to be suspicious, and all those involved in the process are appropriately trained for the task which they have to undertake.

CAA Comments:

AvSec: From an AvSec perspective, whilst unattended luggage is clearly a threat, current UK National Aviation Security Programme (NASP) regulations do not cover this aspect. Landside security does not fall within our remit but is the responsibility of airport management and is normally covered by a PSA with local law enforcement. All airports will provide threat assessment training and will always have individuals on hand to deal with such incidents. AvSec would be surprised if it was official policy to allow CSAs to formally deal with suspect or unattended bags beyond the basics i.e. attempting to ascertain ownership before escalating it to the appropriate authority.

Airspace, ATM & Aerodromes (AAA): Regrettably, this doesn't fall within the Aerodromes or ATM team's remit. Landside terminal operations (other than security and the 'emerging' public health corridor work) are the domain of the HSE not the CAA.

CHIRP Comment: CHIRP was concerned that it appeared to the reporter that untrained staff were being used in such a manner to assess baggage but noted the airport's comments regarding procedures and training for those involved in unattended baggage issues. Understandably, the airport could not go into details for security reasons and so their comments had to be taken at face-value. CHIRP also notes the CAA AvSec and AAA comments regarding Landside security oversight not being their responsibility.

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Report No.7 - Operational Adherence to Dangerous Goods Procedures

Report Text: My colleague and I were required to position from [Departure Airport] to [Destination Airport]. Our company booked us tickets on [3rd-party Airline]. At the gate, my colleague and I got stopped because we both had a hand-luggage trolley. Apparently, this is not allowed [under the terms of our tickets]. The gate employee labelled my trolley and I asked them if I was allowed to take my trolley onboard; they said it wasn't allowed. I then told them I carry a laptop, iPad, rechargeable batteries etc in my trolley so it cannot go in the hold. They told me to speak to the cabin crew to find a solution.

As soon as we arrived outside, one of the groundcrew approached me, pointed at my bag and said, "Hand over". I then explained to them that my bag was full of dangerous goods, which cannot go in the cargo hold. They got angry and said they were going to get their supervisor and disappeared. 10sec later, the supervisor arrived, and also said, in a very brutal way "This is tagged, hand it over, it goes in the hold". I then also tried to explain to them that my bag contained dangerous goods and was unsafe in the hold. Their reply was "I don't care, it has a label, it goes in the hold". This reply left me baffled. The supervisor then told me to 'take whatever you want from the bag, but it's going in the hold'. Having no other choice, I left my bag, with all dangerous goods inside, behind to load in the hold. This action repeated itself with other passengers with labelled trolleys. When I boarded the plane, I passed the SCCM on my way to my seat. I told them that ground staff were taking tagged luggage, loading them in the hold without checking for dangerous goods. They raised their shoulders and said that they would take note and mention it to their superior.

This whole situation baffled me, the way ground personnel and the [3rd-party Airline] crew handled this, with complete disregard of safety, is just unacceptable in this day and age. I don't want to know how many dangerous goods were (and probably are every day) loaded in the hold of a [3rd-party Airline] plane through unchecked hand-luggage. This is just an incident/accident waiting to happen.

3rd-Party Airline Comment: The incident, as reported, is clearly unacceptable. Our Ground Operations and Inflight departments have well-defined procedures which refer to the removal of cabin bags for transfer to the hold as follows:

For the Ground Operations element this includes the statement: *If a bag is deemed to be oversized or is subject to a fee for acceptance and must be placed in the hold, gate agents advise the passenger to remove all flight documents, valuable items, medicines, personal electronic devices and spare lithium batteries from their bag, at the time of tagging the bag.*

For the Inflight element, if cabin crew offload a passenger's carry-on luggage from the cabin to the hold then they are also required to ask questions of the passenger relating to the contents of the item (i.e. whether they have any valuables, medication, lithium batteries etc in the bag) and that they must remove them from the bag prior to it being removed from the aircraft and placed in the hold.

CAA Comment: The requirements, as per below, are very clear and are applicable to not just the Ground Handling Agent (GHA) but the operator, including their crew:

ICAO Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air (ICAO TI) Part 8; Chapter 1.1.5

Baggage intended to be carried in the cabin that is placed in the cargo compartment must only contain dangerous goods permitted in checked baggage. When baggage intended as carry-on is taken by the operator and placed into the cargo compartment for carriage, the operator must confirm with the passenger that dangerous goods which are only permitted in carry-on baggage have been removed.

In accordance with ORO.GEN.205 Contracted Activities, the GHA operates under the operator's approval, and therefore the requirement is applicable to them.

Furthermore, in accordance with ICAO TI Part 7; Chapter 5.2.2

With the aim of preventing dangerous goods, which passengers are not permitted to have, from being taken aboard an aircraft in passengers' baggage or on their person, check-in staff should seek confirmation from a passenger that they are not carrying dangerous goods that are not permitted, and seek further confirmation about the contents of any item where there are suspicions

that it may contain dangerous goods that are not permitted. Many innocuous-looking items may contain dangerous goods, and a list of general descriptions which, experience has shown, often apply to such items is shown in 7;6.

In accordance with ICAO TI Chapter 7; Part 5.2.2 (below), the operator must describe their removal of cabin baggage to the hold in their manuals, this must also be provided to the GHA, therefore all staff must be aware of the procedure;

An operator must provide such information in the operations manual and/or other appropriate manuals as will enable flight crews and other employees to carry out their responsibilities with regard to the transport of dangerous goods. This information must include instructions as to the action to be taken in the event of emergencies involving dangerous goods, and details of the location and numbering system of cargo compartments together with:

- a) the maximum quantity of dry ice permitted in each compartment; and*
- b) if radioactive material is to be carried, instructions on the loading of such dangerous goods based on the requirements of 7;2.9.*

Where applicable, this information must also be provided to ground handling agents.

CHIRP Comment: Of the items listed in the reporter's comment, it was only the rechargeable batteries that were not permitted in the hold baggage (if they were lithium-ion batteries rated greater than 100 Wh); laptops and iPads are permitted (see the associated [CAA website](#) for more details). But the key point is that ground handling and cabin crew must question an owner of the bag about its contents and make sure that such items are removed before the bags are placed in the hold. It seems from the reporter's comments that they were given the opportunity to remove their items, but it appears that this was done in an unnecessarily confrontational manner where perhaps the imperative to achieve a departure on time was probably driving the behaviour of those involved. Whether or not this is a widespread problem is open to debate. The seemingly increasing tendency for passengers to board with increased amounts of cabin luggage in order to avoid hold charges or baggage-handling delays on arrival, means that there is potential for more bags to be offloaded into the hold at the aircraft. When doing so, there is a clear imperative (and existing regulation and procedures) for ground handling and cabin crew staff to be unambiguous in highlighting to passengers what is not permitted and making sure that the passengers remove any associated items before the bag is placed in the hold. If, as it appears was the case in this incident, the passenger says that there are dangerous goods in their bags but declines to remove them, then the bag should not be loaded in the hold.

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