

# CHIRP CC FEEDBACK

Issue No: 45

4/2012

## EDITORIAL

### SECURITY CHECKS & SUSPICIOUS ITEMS

The effectiveness of onboard security searches is an important element in combating the potential threat of terrorist attacks. Thus, it is important that these tasks are undertaken diligently, even when under time or other pressures.

Whilst most cabin crew members, who continue to maintain a consistently high standard, are to be congratulated, a number of recent reports suggest that a small number of cabin crew and some flight crew members may be becoming complacent in their approach to security searches/suspicious objects.

The absence of any major security related incidents in the recent past might lead individuals to believe that the threat has diminished. This is not the case; it continues to be very important that security searches for suspicious objects are conducted in accordance with company requirements and company SOPs and are strictly complied with.

Everyone should remain on their guard and carefully check all of the required areas of the aircraft, both for their own safety and that of fellow crewmembers and passengers.

### SUSPICIOUS ITEM

**Report Text:** Approx 4 hours into the flight the SCCM was advised by a cabin crew member that they had found a suspicious device in the toilet. The SCCM went to look at the device which was plugged into the shaver socket in the toilet. At the same time a passenger collapsed near the toilet in question; this instantly stretched our resources as the majority of the crew were on rest; some of the crew were asked to come back on duty to attend to the collapsed passenger.

The SCCM was concerned that until there was a better understanding of the situation that the collapsed passenger might be a security diversionary tactic. The SCCM acted in accordance with the company SOPs and went to the flight deck to discuss the object, which looked like a laptop battery. (Our training tells us that suspicious devices may be disguised).

The SCCM entered the flight deck and spoke with the Captain and FO. The Captain seemed to take little regard of the SCCM's concerns, did not ask for any further information and told them to remove the object. The device was eventually claimed by a passenger who was warned of the severity of the situation.

**CHIRP Comment:** The SCCM was faced with a combination of problems that he/she assessed as a potential risk to the safety of the aircraft. He/she correctly brought this information to the attention of the Commander.

It is unlikely that the concerns that the SCCM would seem to have described clearly were ignored. The Commander, who has the overall responsibility for the safety of the aircraft, crew and passengers, having assessed the probability of the two events being linked, decided what should be done to resolve the situation.

### LONG DUTY HOURS

**Report Text:** I reported for duty at 0915 local time. Due to a maintenance problem the flight crew went out of hours and we did not push back until after 1500. Arrival into our destination was then after 0230. (Plus 30 mins clearing time). The total duty day was over 17hrs 30 mins. I would like to question the legality of this trip with regards to hours.

**CHIRP Comment:** The maximum Flight Duty Period for a cabin crew member reporting for a single sector duty at the time stated is 15 hours. With the addition of three hours' Commander's Discretion, as is permitted by the CAA Guidelines in the circumstances described, the Flight Duty Period would seem to have been completed within the permitted extension. Clearly this turned out to be a long and tiring day for the reporter and other crew members, but if it was a 'one-off' occurrence it would appear not to have breached the Company's Approved FTL Scheme.

If you are in doubt as to the length of a Flight Duty or Duty Period, it is always best to raise your concerns with your company.

### PILOT PRESENCE WHILST DISEMBARKING

**Report Text:** After pulling on stand the aircraft was being disembarked from the forward door. With approximately 40 passengers still waiting to leave the aircraft both pilots left the aircraft to go home. This is against company procedure for this aircraft type and seems to be happening with some frequency at my company and I feel that this needs to be reported. My understanding is if there were an incident on board pilots are needed to lower the flaps so passengers can evacuate from the overwing exits. Should an incident have occurred then no one would have been there to do this. An engineer was present but my understanding is that at least one pilot should remain on board at all times should passengers be on the plane.

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**CHIRP Comment:** The Commander is legally responsible for the safety of passengers at all times they are on board the aircraft, except where he/she is absolved from that responsibility by a company instruction/procedure, such as when an appropriately trained engineer is on board. A minimum cabin crew complement is also required whenever there are passengers on board the aircraft.

If, as reported, the flight crew left the aeroplane without good reason whilst passengers were still on board it would be difficult for the commander to explain if anything untoward had occurred how he/she had carried out his/her responsibilities towards the safety of passengers and crew.

The occurrence was reported to the company. Following a review of the relevant company procedure, a clarification as to when a flight crew member is required to be present on the aircraft is to be issued.

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## **GALLEY SAFETY STANDARDS**

**Report Text:** This is not a specific event, but a general observation that I brought to my company's attention a while ago.

Our brewers have a serious problem with leaking. On landing, with the force of the braking action, water tends to shoot out from under the brewers; this can either be a small trickle, or a large flow of water, soaking the rear galley floor on landing. I'm worried that something will happen on landing like an evacuation, and our galley floor is soaking. This also happens on a few other aircraft with wet galleys forward of doors 1.

**CHIRP Comment:** Problems associated with the spillage of liquids in a galley can often be traced to blockages/restrictions in the drain pipes, which in some aircraft types are interconnected. Guidance on the disposal of such items as fruit juice, tea/coffee bags is designed to minimise such problems.

It is important to note that although the floor area in the vicinity of galleys is protected by liquid barriers, significant spillage of any liquid should be reported in the Cabin Defects Log to ensure that liquid does not contaminate underfloor wiring/electrical equipment.

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## **UN-CHILLED MEALS**

**Report Text:** The flight was delayed for several hours due to maintenance. Throughout the delay the passenger meals were stored in un-chilled ovens on the aircraft without any air conditioning due to the Auxiliary Power Unit being unserviceable, during which time the cabin temperature reached 30 degrees.

The meals had been onboard for more than seven hours without being checked by Catering; several passengers were physically sick towards the end of the flight. I feel this was a potentially dangerous situation.

**CHIRP Comment:** Ensuring that meals are safe is most important. In the case of some operators the contracted catering organisation is responsible for monitoring delays after meals have been delivered onboard and are required by legislation to remove/replace meals after a specific time period has

elapsed. Notwithstanding this, the SCCM has a responsibility to ensure that onboard meals are fit for consumption and in the case of an extended delay such as that described should arrange for replacement meals to be delivered prior to departure.

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## **USE OF MOBILE PHONES DURING TAXI**

**Report Text:** A mix up between ground staff and Operations occurred. Passengers were told due to bad weather we were no longer flying to the scheduled destination but would be diverting to another city. As crew we were told we were going to try and get into the scheduled destination but the chances were that we would end up diverting (so much so all passengers who didn't have the correct documentation for the diversion location were offloaded).

We told the Captain of the confusion at the start of boarding and he said we would make an announcement to give the passengers time to notify relatives about being picked up. The Captain left this announcement, despite polite requests for it to be done sooner rather than later, until just before pushback and told me he would inform the passengers when they needed to turn their phones off again. This meant that phones were left on and used throughout taxiing and during the safety demonstration. The Captain made an announcement for passengers to turn their phones off just as we approached the runway for take-off. This makes it very difficult the next time we need them to turn off their phones and then a customer says 'well you let me do it before!'

Am I correct in saying that phones have to be switched off during the safety demonstration and the taxi?

**CHIRP Comment:** The flight crew tasks associated with a change of destination are numerous and must be afforded priority in a situation such as that described. Flight crew are required to prioritise tasks in the following order: aviate/navigate/communicate.

The Commander's wish to explain the circumstances to the passengers was well intentioned. However, in the circumstances, delegating this task to the SCCM earlier might have been the preferred course of action since from a regulatory point of view the use of telephones is not permitted during a pre-flight safety demonstration and precludes the cabin crew from completing their cabin secure check.

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## **MINIMUM CREW COMPLEMENT**

The Captain wanted one of the crew to join him in the flight deck for landing. I said that I wanted all the crew in their cabin positions as the cabin crew complement was the minimum crewing level for the aircraft. I also stated that although the company manual permitted one less crew member in specific circumstances that required a company report to be submitted by the captain, this wasn't an unforeseen circumstance and no report would be raised. I suggested that, as the Captain, he could overrule me but I would not agree otherwise.

I think had I not been so confident in my knowledge of the company procedures manual because of my experience, he would have gone on until I conceded my

opinion. Please could you clarify if I was right to stand my ground in that minimum crew means minimum crew in the cabin, so that I can be confident if I am faced with the same dilemma again?

**CHIRP Comment:** The minimum cabin crew complement specified in the Operations Manual is that required for the safety of the passengers and where only the minimum cabin crew are on board they must all be seated in their allocated seating positions. Alleviations to the minimum crew may only be permitted in specific circumstances.

It is not clear why the Commander thought it necessary to have one of the cabin crew on the flight deck and therefore override Company procedures - this would be acceptable only in emergency or abnormal circumstances which could affect safety. The reporter handled a difficult situation well in the interests of the safety of passengers.

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## **INTOXICATED PASSENGER PROBLEM**

**Report Text:** A passenger boarded and spoke to another crew member on the flight; the passenger was repeating the same sentence over and over again. My colleague had already shown the passenger to their seat but the individual could not focus on what my colleague was saying and was confused. The other crew member came to me and reported the passenger's confused state and that they stank of alcohol.

I then decided to speak to the passenger. I said I was concerned because they had been drinking alcohol and it was affecting their demeanour and behaviour. Their body language, facial expressions and the way they spoke were all evidence of them having been drinking. I said if we allowed them to travel it would be with their agreement that they were not to be served any more alcohol on the flight. The passenger would not agree to this.

I went to the flight deck and informed the Captain. Without my knowledge the passenger had walked up behind me as I entered the flight deck, so the Captain had sight of the individual, the Captain agreed he could see the passenger had been drinking despite their complete denial. Both the Captain and I decided that they could not travel.

I carried the passenger's bags up the jetty with another crew member and we walked to the boarding gate with the passenger. I told a member of ground staff why this passenger couldn't travel and returned to the aircraft. We continued with boarding.

A couple of minutes later the passenger was back at the aircraft door with the same member of ground staff and the aircraft dispatcher. They kept insisting that this passenger had a diplomatic passport and why couldn't they travel? I told them both several times why. The fact that the passenger had a diplomatic passport seemed to be an issue for them and they would not take the passenger away from the aircraft door and accept the decision to offload. I told them both that the Captain and I would not accept this passenger on the aircraft. The dispatcher then took out a mobile phone, rang someone, I assume it was the station manager, the mobile phone was passed to me and I spoke to them.

The person on the phone then said again, 'but they have a diplomatic passport', I again had to be assertive and refused to allow the passenger to travel. All this time the passenger was standing at the door as the ground staff would not take him away. Finally I closed the door.

When the door had half lowered the passenger put their hand out and touched it to try and stop it closing. I then stopped closing the door - for fear of injuring the individual. I walked this passenger off the aircraft back to the boarding gate again, explained again to ground staff that they had been offloaded and why. They bought this passenger back again to the aircraft door and then harassed me to let them fly because of having a diplomatic passport. I refused again then restarted door closing procedures.

I feel that the Ground staff at this base did not prioritise the safety of this flight; and did not follow the company's standard operating procedures for offloading passengers. I reported this to my company and requested that they contact the airport and ensure that in future correct procedures are followed if crew offload a passenger. To date I have had no response.

**CHIRP Comment:** Both the reporter and the Commander worked well together in this stressful situation and acted entirely correctly in denying a passenger who was visibly displaying signs of drunkenness, irrespective of their status.

It is important to remember that the effects of alcohol are increased by the reduced aircraft cabin pressure; this must be taken into account when assessing whether an individual is fit to fly. The company has confirmed that ground staff at outstations have been reminded of the company's policies regarding the assessment of a passenger's fitness to fly.

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## **INFREQUENT RECENCY**

**Report Text:** I'm expected to fly on three different types of aircraft which, as a part time cabin crew member, can be difficult to achieve.

For a period of time we had only a small number of one of the aircraft types so I feel it's a little hard and quite a lot to be expected of us. I didn't fly on this type of aircraft for 18 months and had only completed 2 flights by the time my recurrent course came along, I was unhappy to do just that and then go back out flying, so I asked for a conversion course which was then arranged for me. I know I should use my own time to keep myself up to date, however I feel it's a little too much to ask and maybe a safety issue.

I have raised my point suggesting a volunteer list to operate on this type until we have more aircraft - my company has said this is not possible as they would like flexibility and it is my responsibility to keep in check.

**CHIRP Comment:** This is not an infrequent problem, which some operators acknowledge by making additional information readily available and providing assistance when requested.

Both the company and the individual have a responsibility to ensure that crew members are competent to operate. If you are in any doubt about your ability to operate, raise your concern with your company.