

CHIRP CC FEEDBACK

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EDITORIAL

How IMPORTANT IS GOOD CRM?

Four of the principal aims of Crew Resource Management (CRM) training are:

- To develop accurate and effective decision making.
- To develop good communications skills.
- To make effective use of all members of a crew.
- To gain a good understanding of each crew member's role.

So how can you contribute to a good standard of CRM?

The first is to understand what your basic responsibilities are and to carry them out to the best of your ability. Sometimes, it is easier to leave a difficult situation for a colleague to sort out or not raise a query at the time, relying on someone else to take the responsibility. However, dealing with these situations effectively yourself is part of your professional role.

The second is to understand that the way in which you communicate issues with passengers, your cabin colleagues and the flight crew will influence the way in which they react and possibly the outcome. It is important not to be inhibited but it is equally important to frame your instruction/query calmly in a positive, non-confrontational way.

Also, remember that the aircraft commander has the responsibility for the safety of the aircraft, crew and passengers and thus might have a wider perspective on a particular issue. Similarly, the Senior Cabin Crew Member (SCCM) might have experienced a similar situation previously.

A final thought; there might be occasions when you do not like the aircraft commander's/SCCM's decision. If such a situation should arise it is your professional duty to accept it and, if necessary, to raise your concern after your duty either directly or in a report to your company.

We have included several reports relating to CRM in this issue. What would you have done in each case?

CHILD AT OVERWING EXIT

Report Text: On commencing boarding a family of five - mother, father and 3 children boarded and were seated by the overwing emergency exit. The family's youngest child had a baby seat brought on by the parents; this was secured in one seat.

For the safety demonstration I was positioned at the front of the cabin. On completion of the demo I then commenced my cabin secure checks. I noted that instead of the mother and father sitting at the window seats, the mother had moved to the aisle and the three

year old boy was sitting where his mother had been. I completed the security checks in the cabin and then informed my colleague, who was senior to me, that a child could not be at the emergency exit row. I was told that during the safety demo, the mother had been moved to the aisle seat so that, if there was a decompression, she would be able to help the other two children secure their oxygen masks. I expressed my concern about a young child being allowed to sit at the emergency exit as this would hinder an evacuation. My senior colleague contacted the SCCM and as the aircraft was now taxiing towards the runway for take-off, we were told to take our seats for take-off.

After take-off when the seat belt signs were turned off, I expressed my concern again about the three year old child at the over-wing emergency exit. Later the father and three year old son were moved to another row for landing as the aircraft was not full.

CHIRP Comment: Most companies would expect cabin crew to take individual responsibility for ensuring that passengers are seated in accordance with company SOPs in their designated area. In this situation there would appear to have been an opportunity to have resolved the family seating arrangements to comply fully with the company SOPs by relocating the relevant passengers to a more suitable row, if this was the most appropriate course of action, as the aircraft was not full.

LANDING PRIOR TO CABIN SECURE

Report Text: During the pre-flight briefing, the Captain emphasised that it was imperative that we departed on time. However, our departure was delayed due to the amount of hand luggage that had been carried onboard by passengers and a significant number of bags had to be taken from them and loaded into the hold. Due to the delayed departure, our scheduled arrival time was delayed by 55 mins.

We had commenced the approach to our destination and the flight crew had made the "Twenty minutes to landing" announcement. Outside it was very dark and, as there were few ground lights, it was hard to see through the cabin windows how far from the ground the aircraft was. I was operating as the crew member leading the team in the rear cabin; the company SOPs state that it is I who should pass on the cabin secure to the SCCM.

We were all busy securing the cabin; many passengers tried to keep their hand luggage behind their feet or in their laps instead of returning them to overhead lockers, where they'd been for take-off. There were also many children (older than 2 years) in the laps of adults; it took us some time to return them to their own seats. All of

www.chirp.co.uk

FREEPOST RSKS-KSCA-SSAT, CHIRP, 26 Hercules Way, Farnborough GU14 6UU (UK only)

confidential@chirp.co.uk

Freephone (UK only): 0800 214645 or +44 (0) 1252 378947

this meant that securing the cabin took longer than "normal".

As the SCCM had not received the "Cabin secure" notification, he/she had called the rear galley to check for progress. Another crew member had answered the interphone. The SCCM pressurised the crew member for a "Cabin secure". Even though the crew member could see that the rest of the crew were still securing the cabin he/she incorrectly informed the SCCM that the cabin was secure. Also, the crew member who had reported the "Cabin secure" did not advise those of us still in the cabin of how close we actually were to landing. On receiving the "Cabin secure" report, the SCCM made the "Cabin crew take your seats for landing" announcement.

Those of us still in the cabin managed to secure the last passengers within approximately 30 seconds and then started to move towards our crew seats. I glanced out of the window, and noticed how imminent our landing would be (based on the few ground lights I could see) and therefore rushed the crew to get to their seats. There was no time to call the SCCM and alert him/her of the erroneous "Cabin Secure" report that they had been given. Seconds before touch-down, I sat down on my seat and only just managed to strap myself in and so did one of the other crew members. The third crew member was still moving through the cabin and just as we touched down reached their crew seat but never managed to strap in. We must have been given a direct approach, because we landed little more than ten minutes after the 20- minute call.

CHIRP Comment: This report highlights the importance of complying with company SOPs and effective communication between cabin crew members. The "Cabin secure" notification should have been given by the designated crew member and only when the cabin had been fully secured. Had the SCCM been made aware of the situation in the rear cabin, he/she could have alerted the flight crew.

Situations can arise at some destinations where subsequent to the 20-minute call a change in routing will reduce the time to landing. Such a change can significantly increase the workload of the flight crew; however, it is important that the change is communicated to the SCCM to ensure that it is possible to secure the cabin in the time remaining.

CABIN DOOR PROBLEM

Report Text: Following the command to arm the cabin doors for departure, whilst cross checking my senior colleague and I both noticed that there was a spot of daylight shining through under the rear door. On closer inspection at floor level, we found that daylight was visible along the whole length of the bottom of the door. From inside the cabin, it appeared as if the door sill was dented approximately a third of the way across, which is where the main light was shining through; although daylight was visible the whole length of the door.

My senior colleague informed the SCCM at the front and then proceeded to the flight deck to inform the Commander. He apparently contacted engineering at base. We don't know what was said but the reply that came back from the flight deck was, "We are going and

if the door does not seal after take-off and the cabin does not pressurise, we will just come back." To be honest, I was disgusted with this response. The Captain is not the one that has got to sit next to the door for take-off, not knowing if it will seal or cause the cabin to have a decompression, etc. I understand that these doors are a plug type but surely, if they are relying on the seal to expand into the door to block it, it will "go" at some point and cause a rapid decompression in flight? The Commander didn't contact us after take-off to assess the situation. Obviously it did pressurise this time, but the next crew might not be so lucky.

After landing at our destination, before we had turned off the runway, the light was again visible. All the crew were concerned about this but the flight deck (both of them) didn't seem to care.

CHIRP Comment: The reporter and colleague acted correctly by advising the aircraft commander of their concern. The aircraft commander's action to discuss the condition with engineering was also entirely correct as was his decision to conduct the flight, since the failure of a door-seal to seal correctly on the ground is not a flight safety hazard, provided that the door is closed correctly and indicates 'Closed'. Under most conditions, the door seal will seal correctly as the cabin pressure increases; in the event that it does not, there might be a risk that the cabin would fail to pressurise, as the aircraft commander explained.

The important lesson to be drawn from this report is to remember that the flight crew's knowledge of such situations is more extensive than that of cabin crew. If an aircraft commander's explanation should not be sufficient to alleviate cabin crews' concerns, as might be assumed in this report, a polite request for a more detailed explanation should result in a positive and informative response.

NITS CONFUSION

Report Text: This report covers a muddled emergency ground disembarkation. The main problem was a lack of SOP's, which produced a confused and uninformed disembarkation of passengers. I wish to learn from, and offer this experience to others - not to point fingers of blame. Communication failed from the very beginning.

I have waited for the company to produce an explanation, but have not received one.

After pushback for a late evening departure, the cabin lights went out, as often happens. I saw fire engines racing by whilst I was in the cabin; I assumed it was for some other aircraft. Upon returning to the forward galley, a colleague told me that there was about to be a NITS briefing. I was surprised, since there had been no call from the flight crew. Apparently the SCCM had been in the flight deck when the situation had occurred.

I went to stand by the SCCM to overhear the NITS briefing but because there had been no Alert Call, the SCCM was having great difficulty contacting the other crew members, who were unaware of any problem. Whilst the SCCM was struggling to get hold of everyone on the phone, the Captain made a PA (reassuring the passengers of the darkness); this prevented other crew members from hearing what the SCCM was trying to tell them on the phone. The NITS briefing never occurred.

The crew still did not know what the problem was - and did not until the passengers had disembarked.

I cannot remember exactly at what point we got back to the stand. The SCCM told me that he/she called for the crew to disarm the doors. A little later, the Captain made the same call. The Captain then made another PA, asking passengers to stand up and leave the aircraft.

Shortly after passengers were told to take everything with them; I cannot remember but assume that it was a PA, since all of the passengers started to get their belongings from overhead lockers, etc. At no stage were the crew aware of the nature of the problem or that this was supposed to be a rapid disembarkation; nor were other crew members aware that there had been an attempted NITS briefing. At a guess, it took about 10 minutes to disembark all of the passengers. I was told that the fire brigade had asked why we had returned to stand, and why we hadn't used the slides, since there had been a fire in the auxiliary power unit (APU) which they had had trouble extinguishing.

Once the passengers had left, the Captain called the crew to the front of the aircraft to tell us that there had been a fire in the APU, and that he would await the engineers' OK as to whether we could continue the flight, as the APU was not essential for a flight. He then instructed us to go to the terminal and look after the passengers, which we did.

The Captain later informed the SCCM that he would submit a company report on the incident.

My main points of concern about this incident are:

1. The absence of a NITS briefing meant that the crew were unaware of a developing situation.
2. The Captain's PA interfered with the SCCM's attempt to give a NITS briefing.
3. The crew were unaware that an emergency disembarkation was a possibility.
4. No post-flight wash-up meeting occurred to discuss the way that the situation had been handled.

CHIRP Comment: This report highlights the importance of effective communication in a non-normal situation.

If a subsequent wash-up meeting had taken place, it would have given both the flight crew and cabin crew the opportunity to discuss how the situation had been handled and what could be learned to avoid similar difficulties.

The reporter's concerns were discussed with the operator, following which the reporter was invited to discuss the incident and their concerns directly with a manager. The offer was accepted.

CREW SEATING POSITIONS

Report Text: On our ### series, a crew member positioned at one of the doors will sit forward for take-off and landing. Sitting in this position you cannot see activity in the cabin as you are facing the wrong way, plus you cannot reach the interphone without releasing your harness and seatbelt which is dangerous if the aircraft is on its roll and you need to contact the SCCM.

On the other series of the same aircraft type you sit rear facing which is better as you can see the whole cabin and can get to the interphone quickly and safely.

I have not mentioned this to the company.

CHIRP Comment: All cabin crew/passenger seating configurations are required to be approved by the CAA; therefore, if you have a query on this topic, you should raise it with your company in the first instance. The reporter's concern was discussed with the CAA Cabin Safety Office, following which the aircraft was inspected. The crew seat did comply with the relevant regulations; however, some placard information associated with its use was incorrect.

As regards access to the interphone, the following regulations apply:

EU-OPS 1.690 requires an interphone to be readily accessible for use at required cabin crew stations close to each separate or pair of floor level emergency exits.

EU-OPS 1.695 requires that a microphone (PA) can serve more than one exit, provided the proximity of the exits allows unassisted verbal communication between seated cabin crew members.

In the case reported, the crew members were able to see each other and communicate verbally.

EXCESSIVE CABIN TEMPERATURE

Report Text: We left base with an unserviceable APU. This had been the case on this aircraft for over a week.

Having boarded passengers and waiting for departure from our destination, the cabin temperature rose to an unacceptable level. Passengers were becoming distraught and uncomfortable in the sweltering conditions.

If the company are not going to fix the APU, why aren't they making suitable arrangements for cabin temperature? I have absolutely no doubt that the cabin temperature was well in excess of 30°C.

I would add that in no way do I blame the Captain, he was doing everything he could but there doesn't seem to be any urgency being put into getting a known problem fixed.

CHIRP Comment: In most circumstances an aircraft can be despatched with an inoperative Auxiliary Power Unit.

Whereas in some circumstances it might be possible to arrange for supplementary ground cooling to be available or reschedule the aircraft to avoid high temperature destinations, this may not always be possible. In such a case the operator has to balance the discomfort of passengers and crew against the effect on passengers of cancelling the flight. As we have previously mentioned there are no maximum temperature limits for an aircraft cabin.

It is in an operator's interest to repair an unserviceable APU as expeditiously as possible; however, there will be occasions when the required spares are not immediately available and the aircraft is required to operate for several days without an APU.
