

CHIRP CC FEEDBACK

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EDITORIAL

WHO ARE WE? (1)

We receive queries from readers of Cabin Crew FEEDBACK as to who we are, what our backgrounds are and how we deal with reports. From time to time, we will include an item on one or more of these aspects.

There are two key elements to CHIRP; the staff who run the different programmes on a daily basis and the Advisory Boards who provide subject matter expertise on complex issues raised in reports.

The CHIRP staff and Board Members have changed over the last few years, so in this and the next issue of CHIRP I will introduce both the key staff members and members of the Cabin Crew Advisory Board.

The CHIRP team currently comprises of five members of staff; 3 full-time and 2 part-time. Our offices are located at the Aerospace Centre, overlooking Farnborough airfield in Hampshire.

I am Stephanie Colbourne, the Administration and Cabin Crew Programme Manager. I joined CHIRP in May 2012, taking over from Kirsty Arnold who had been dealing with the cabin crew reports since the programme started in 2001. I previously worked for bmi British Midland in the Cabin Crew and Flight Crew Training department for 5 years, and beforehand as a Customer Service Agent on check-in at Heathrow Terminal 1. I have recently attended an Initial SEP course with a large airline operator and also a Flight Safety Officer's course with the UK Flight Safety Committee.

Our new Chief Executive is Ian Dugmore. He is a former RAF pilot and has moved to CHIRP from the UK Airprox Board, which investigates losses of separation between commercial and other aircraft. He has replaced Peter Tait who has recently retired after filling this role for seventeen years. The Chief Executive deals with all flight crew, ATC, maintenance engineer and General Aviation reports; he also assists me with the cabin crew issues involving flight crew, CRM and flight time limitations.

Mick Skinner is our Deputy Director (Engineering); he retired from a senior engineering post with a major UK operator and now deals with all of the engineering reports. We also have another colleague, Bishnu Sunuwar, our IT guru, who manages our computer systems and designs our web pages.

CHIRP also operates a Maritime confidential reporting programme.

Next issue: Who Are We? (2) – The Cabin Crew Advisory Board.

Stephanie Colbourne

Number of Reports Received: 01.06.13 – 31.08.13 =38

Topics have included:

- Check-in and Duty Times
- Emergency Lights
- Use of Infant Seatbelts
- Fatigue
- Cabin Crew Experience
- Baggage Stowage
- CRM Issues

CABIN CREW BRACE POSITION

Report Text: I'd like to bring up the crew brace position. In the FWD facing crew seat on any aircraft we fly on, they say knees and feet together slightly aft of jumpseat. I think with knees and feet together you have no stance and if your legs are slightly apart you would have more stance and can hold the ground better. A lot of airlines sit on their hands and have their hands on their knees or grip the fwd edge of the seat pan. This makes sense; as if your hands are someplace else and there is a sudden impact your hands will go flying up or flail around if you're knocked unconscious. Shouldn't all UK airlines follow the same hymn sheet? I've mentioned the above to senior management where I'm based but nothing has been done about it.

Lessons Learned: The semi brace position for cabin crew should be the same for all UK airlines. I think another operator has the best policy - palms up or palms down on the jumpseat, feet and knees slightly apart. That way the hands are being protected and if you are knocked out on an impact your hands won't be in the way, also if the jumpseat collapses you will not break your hands as you're in the palms up position.

CHIRP Comment: Following the Kegworth air disaster in 1989, the UK CAA contracted an engineering consultancy to perform computer based analytical investigation to optimise the brace impact for forward facing passengers. This was supported by medical information from the University of Nottingham and testing at the Institute of Aviation Medicine. There has been relatively little research into the best cabin crew brace position although several airlines have specified similar instructions. Brace positions are intended to protect cabin crew from impact deceleration forces and there is no evidence to suggest one offers any enhancement over the other.

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CHARGING ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Report Text: A passenger asked if we had any leads to charge their laptop, we did not. They then asked me to charge the laptop at another charging point; I explained the safety implications of leaving an unattended lithium battery to charge and declined the request. Unhappy, the passenger spoke to the SCCM who then promptly charged the laptop unattended. The SCCM was challenged about the safety implications and the lack of crew support, however the unit continued to be charged and I chose to make regular checks on it to ensure onboard safety. Company notices forbid this non-standard operation.

Lessons Learned: To remedy this, the company should provide leads for use by passengers. I would also suggest that they re-issue notices.

CHIRP Comment: Whilst portable electronic devices are plugged into a power supply there is the potential for faulty, damaged or counterfeit batteries to malfunction with serious consequences. Operators are required to establish procedures for monitoring of devices plugged into aeroplane systems which may include restricting charging to use of the device only. When incidents as described in this report occur, it is important that cabin crew complete a company incident report. Electrical outlets for aeroplane servicing are not designed for charging PED's; use of these could result in thermal runaway of the battery or malfunction of the aeroplane electrical system.

CABIN CREW COLOUR VISION

Report Text: Whilst I was conducting training for a company I was sharing a room with a cabin crew member. During this time he informed me that he was colour blind. This gave me a little concern, but I was afraid to say anything to him or the company in question. I do think this is something that should be looked into for the safety of the airline. He had told me he can tell the difference on the call panel by the location rather than the colours.

CHIRP Comment: Current EU-OPS standards do not require colour vision testing. EASA Part-MED requires a cabin crew member to correctly identify 9 of the first 15 plates of the 24-plate Ishihara pseudoisochromatic plates. Alternatively the cabin crew member should demonstrate that they are colour-safe by means of a suitable functional test. Such tests would include the successful completion of company SEP training. With safety-critical tasks, for example door operations and the use of fire extinguishers, there are sufficient alternative cues to enable a crew member with impaired colour vision to operate safely.

RODENT ONBOARD

Report Text: We were coming into land and I was seated looking down the aisle towards the front of the cabin. A mouse came up the aisle and went into a stowage opposite the toilets. It managed to get across the aisle (via a hole in the stowage) to the door where the crew on the other side were able to see it. It continued to do

this - go from one side to the other - until after landing, obviously trying to get out of the stowage where it was effectively trapped. The passenger load was relatively light so no passengers saw it. The SCCM recorded this on our forms and I informed the Captain and the Engineer after landing. The matter seemed to be taken quite lightly and no one entered the incident into the maintenance log.

Upon returning back to base I contacted my manager who said that the aircraft had not been taken out of service and was currently airborne again. I was told that engineering would telephone me to discuss the incident. They did not. When I went back to work, I went to see my manager who again informed me that there was no record of anything being done to the aircraft. Again, the matter seemed to be taken quite lightly and to my knowledge the mouse still remains onboard the aircraft!

Lessons Learned: The incident should have been taken more seriously and acted upon. The fact that the maintenance log had not been filled in seemed to give everyone an excuse for inaction.

CHIRP Comment: All aircraft operators realise the importance of protecting aircrew and aircraft from pests that might affect health or safety. Rodents, including mice and rats, are un-common hitchhikers on aircraft. Most major airports with electronic airbridges offer little opportunity for rodents to get aboard aircraft. But, occasionally they do get onto aircraft, usually in goods or containers or via wheel wells or stairways. A rodent aboard an aircraft poses a serious risk to the proper operation of the aircraft.

Aircraft in which a rodent or a sighting of a rodent has been made should be inspected as soon as possible by the engineering department to ensure that no damage to electrical wiring or equipment has been caused. There is also the health and safety impact with regards to food hygiene and the germs that the rodent could be carrying. When something like this occurs, the cabin crew member should report the incident as soon as they have returned to base, as has been done in this situation to ensure that the aircraft is properly checked before it departs on another sector.

USE OF INFANT SEATBELT

Report Text: Whilst taxiing out a family with two children were having difficulty getting their children to remain in their respective seats for take-off. Both children were more than two years old and far too big to be allowed to sit on their parent's laps. Cabin crew managed to calm the children down, strap them in and although they were crying loudly, they were both secured for take-off. Shortly after this task had been completed, the SCCM requested the cabin secure check. Another cabin crew member tried to explain that the checks were taking a bit longer to complete as the family had issues with securing their children. At this point the SCCM told the cabin crew member to bring two extension seatbelts. The cabin crew member tried to state that they were not infants and reiterated that whilst they may be crying, they were both in their seats with their seatbelts fastened. A second cabin crew member also tried to explain this to the SCCM, however they stated in front of the passengers that they were 'overriding' them and

demanded that two extension seatbelts be brought. They then fetched the extension seatbelts themselves and strapped the children in on their parent's laps. They remained there for take-off.

It must also be noted that prior to landing back at base, a passenger several rows behind had seen what had happened and asked that their child also be given an extension seatbelt for landing. Again the SCCM said that they were 'happy to take the flack' by allowing the child to sit on an adults lap. They also said that they had mentioned it to the Captain who would back them up if necessary, however I did not get a chance to speak to the Captain about the matter. Myself and two other cabin crew members made it clear that we were extremely unhappy at the way they intervened in what was a resolved situation, undermining the cabin crew in front of passengers and also contravened regulatory and company safety mandates regarding children and infant seating.

Lessons Learned: Re-issue the rules regarding infant and child seating and the importance of ensuring correctness in this matter to make sure that brace positions are able to be adopted in the event of an emergency.

CHIRP Comment: Children over the age of two years must be secured in their own seat for take-off and landing. Procedures regarding multiple occupancy of aeroplane seats are detailed in the operations manuals and crew members should work together to ensure that these are applied. When incidents as described in this report occur it is important that cabin crew complete a company incident report.

BROKEN PASSENGER SEAT

Report Text: The flight had a full load of passengers but with a broken seat. The seat would not lock into the taxi/take-off position and kept reclining whilst the passenger was seated; the passenger had highlighted this to the crew. Engineers were called by the SCCM, who looked at the seat and then reported to the SCCM that the seat was fixed and left the aircraft. With approx 15 minutes before STD, the passenger informed the cabin crew that the seat was still not fixed. The SCCM informed the Captain and dispatcher of the situation, which could now impact on punctuality; offload of the passenger may occur if the seat was unusable and there were no empty seats to utilise. Engineers returned but could not fix the seat with the time available and in front of the passengers stated that the seat was unusable.

The dispatcher came into the cabin to speak with the SCCM to say they needed to close the door; the SCCM was informed the situation was unresolved. Then the First Officer came to say we needed to get going. The engineers then said the seat was ok for take-off and we could go, even though no action to the seat had taken place! The ground staff left the aircraft and the door was closed; leaving the SCCM to deal with the unhappy passenger sitting in a seat which was not locked in the correct position, which was unsafe and they were powerless to do anything about it. The passenger

eventually accepted that we were leaving and they had to put up with it. The passenger spoke with the SCCM in flight and voiced their concerns that their safety came second to other factors to which SCCM agreed with them.

CHIRP Comment: Commercial pressures such as on-time performance should not influence a safety matter. The aircraft door being closed could have been a sign to the flight crew that the problem had been resolved when in fact the defect had not been rectified. The SCCM should be able to voice their concerns to the engineer and the operating flight crew. The passenger should not have occupied an unserviceable seat. Procedures in the operations manuals including MEL should be referred to when situations like this occur.

CABIN CREW USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING TAKE-OFF AND LANDING

Report Text: On taxi, take-off roll and into the initial climb the SCCM was using an iPad. A lot of crew seem to adopt the awful habit of texting and whatever else they do with their phones during take-off. I always drop a hint but it never seems to work. Passengers who are sitting in the first row can definitely see the crew member and if they're texting, what sort of impression would this give? I haven't mentioned this to the company as I'm dubious of mentioning names, I appreciate this is a serious safety breach and must be dealt with. This is why I'm using CHIRP.

CHIRP Comment: Take-off and landing are classed as critical phases of flight, therefore cabin crew members must be alert and ready to respond to any situation that could occur. Restrictions on passenger and crew member use of PED's during take-off and landing are detailed in your company's Operations Manual and cabin crew members should ensure that these are applied. Cabin crew should be aware of the restrictions and also feel that they can discuss issues with colleagues without fear of reprisal. Instances of cabin crew members using PED's or carrying out other tasks such as paperwork, reading, eating, drinking during critical phases of flight should be reminded of their responsibilities and if necessary reported to your company.

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