

CHIRP Cabin Crew FEEDBACK

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EDITORIAL – THE USE OF CONTROLLED REST DURING FLIGHTS

CHIRP have received a number of reports regarding the use of Flight Crew Controlled Rest during flights where it has been apparent that some reporters were uneasy about the safety aspects of this procedure and the rationale behind it.

Flight Crew Controlled Rest (sometimes referred to as 'in seat napping') is the process where pilots can take short periods of sleep whilst temporarily being relieved of operational duties in accordance with company prescribed 'controlled rest' procedures. The use of this procedure during periods of reduced cockpit workload during cruise has been proved to increase the levels of alertness during the critical stages of flight, i.e. take-off and landing.

Some aircraft have a designated rest area for the flight crew to use and it is only used when there are more than two flight crew rostered to operate the flight. This is primarily on longer range flights where the maximum allowable flight duty period requires an additional pilot to complete the flight. The flight crew plan who will rest during which period and there must always be two flight crew in the flight deck at one time, except during short physiological breaks.

On shorter flights with only two pilots, in seat napping can be used as a means to combat unexpected tiredness during flight and to ensure that both flight crew are alert at critical stages of flight. This should be planned between the two flight crew, communicated to the cabin crew during the flight and taken during a period of low workload, i.e. the cruise. The Commander must ensure that the other flight crew member who remains awake is briefed properly. Any pilot who uses the in seat napping procedure, should not sleep so long that they enter into a deep sleep, as recovery from this would be too long.

Each operator will have a different procedure for the use of rest during flight which will be specified in the company Operations Manual.

SEATBELTS ON DURING CABIN TURBULENCE

Report Text: I have actually wanted to write for some time about procedures when/during "Seatbelts On" signs are activated by the Commander. The procedure for us, and indeed probably for every airline, is to temporarily disengage from any ongoing activity, in order to check passengers are in their seats, and that their seatbelts are securely fastened. Frequently, passengers who are standing up to retrieve items from overhead bins or waiting to use the toilet, will ignore cabin crew requests to return to their seats. We have been frequently castigated in CAA audits for not insisting passengers return to their seats, particularly in the latter example. Passengers will refuse to comply either at the time the seatbelt signs are switched on or, if they are left on for any length of time, when getting up to use the toilet. Although cabin crew will inform the passenger they should be in their seats with their seatbelt on, the passenger either remonstrates or completely ignores crew. This is becoming an increasing problem, as more and more passengers choose to ignore these specific instructions by crew. There is no comeback on any passenger who does not comply, so there is no compelling reason for the passenger to listen.

We are often very busy, as you know, at these times, trying to complete either securing galleys or attending to other tasks, and so it's beginning to feel like a complete waste of our time. I always inform the flight crew when the cabin is secure but this is almost always accompanied by "some passengers are refusing to return to their seats". The Commander will just say ok, and we leave it at that. I and other crew do not mind doing anything in the course of safety and security - of course, it's part of our duties - but it is getting to the point where it is completely time-wasting for us if there is no recourse about the passengers' actions.

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I have read criticisms of our cabin crew during Audits about the fact that passengers are not being challenged - and perhaps the CAA need to recognise why this is?

I would suggest that either recourse IS taken against passengers who do not reasonably comply or, we send a simple message on the IFE systems "Seatbelts On" (if such an IFE system is fitted) or an announcement is made, and leave it at that.

CAA Comment: With regards to the need for cabin crew to issue instructions to passengers whilst they themselves are also required to be seated, it is considered appropriate that cabin crew do not put themselves at risk of injury (and possible incapacitation) when alternative means of communicating instructions verbally to passengers are available. In the event of passengers not complying with instructions, they should carefully consider the risk posed by the passenger's actions and the risk posed to themselves from not being secured before leaving their seat to address the matter. The CAA would only comment on cabin crew actions where passengers are failing to comply with instructions, such as seatbelt signs, if no action is taken where there is a clear safety matter.

CHIRP Comment: We have received a few reports recently where reporters have been concerned with the general disregard for safety by passengers when the seatbelt sign has been illuminated during flight due to turbulence. Most passengers are aware that when the seatbelt sign is illuminated, they must return to their seats and fasten their seatbelts. However, some choose to continue moving around the cabin or get up to use the bathroom even though they have been advised not to at this time. Depending on the company policy stipulated in the Operations Manual, cabin crew may be expected to challenge passengers ignoring safety advice either by going to speak to them in person or completing a PA. If passengers choose to continue ignoring these commands, the cabin crew should speak to the flight crew and advise the situation in the cabin and ask that they complete a PA.

The flight crew will be aware of any turbulence that is likely to be encountered during a flight and will normally advise the crew of this before passengers board. If the flight crew expect it to be particularly bad, they may ask for the cabin crew to pause or discontinue the service for safety reasons. Some turbulence is unforeseen and therefore cannot be discussed at the crew briefing.

CHIRP recognises that the reporter has correctly followed all turbulence SOPs and done all they can to instruct the passenger to return to and remain in their seat when the seatbelt sign is illuminated. It is the passenger who has chosen to ignore these commands and this must be relayed to the Commander. If it is deemed that the passenger is endangering safety by ignoring these commands they could, depending on the circumstances, be charged with an offence under ANO Article 137 Endangering safety of an aircraft, Article 141 Authority of commander of an aircraft or Article 142 Acting in a disruptive manner.

USE OF COMMANDER'S DISCRETION

Report Text: When leaving base we suffered a substantial delay which made the duty questionable, however the operations manager decided we should still operate and if required Commander's Discretion may be used. This decision was made by operations NOT the Commander at this stage.

On arrival back at base, the duty had (as expected) gone into discretion by 22 minutes. I was the SCCM and had to ask the Commander to complete a discretion report, initially they were reluctant as they hadn't been the operating Commander for the cabin crews entire duty, then they said they had never heard of the form. When they eventually found it, they signed a blank form and gave it to me to complete with all the details, however the form clearly states that it is the Commander's responsibility to complete this.

Lessons Learned - If duties continue to be rostered with little room for delays, then I suggest a re-awareness to all Commanders of the correct procedures to follow, what paperwork is required, where to find it and the process following completion. It would also in my opinion be good to remind Commanders of their responsibilities surrounding discretion.

I also believe that scheduling management are taking it upon themselves to make decisions regarding the use of Commander's Discretion as a 'get out clause', this should be stopped immediately as it contravenes guidelines.

CHIRP Comment: Operators are required to schedule FDPs within the maximum time limits specified in the company scheme which has been approved by the CAA.

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Any duty can be subject to delay and unfortunately this may then result in crew members entering into discretion. All crew members should be aware of the duty that they are able to complete and should keep track of their hours.

The decision to use Commander's Discretion is at the agreement of both the crew and the Commander and should not be agreed by the scheduling department in advance. If a Commander elects to exercise discretion he/she must 'take note of the circumstances of other members of the crew'; but there is no legal requirement for them to hold a face-to-face discussion to notify cabin crew that discretion will be used. Strictly speaking, crew should be made aware that they are to enter discretion – which in the case described this did not occur. The maximum period permitted is 3 hours, except in cases of emergency and the Commander is legally required to complete a Discretion Report which is available for inspection by the CAA Flight Operations Inspector (FOI) designated to oversee the company's operations at a future audit. If a crew member has entered into less than 2 hours discretion there is no requirement for this report to be forwarded to the CAA. Crew members can also submit discretion reports themselves by way of company ASR.

Each operator will also have their own procedures for reporting discretion and these can be found in the company Operations Manual.

EXPERIENCED CREW COMPLEMENT

Report Text: When I checked in for the flight, I was greeted by the other crew members. All but one crew member were on their first operational flight. One crew member was on their second flight but all crew were new to the company after completing their supernumerary flights the week before.

I contacted our crewing department and was put on hold and then advised that they would call me back. This was at check-in time. After a few minutes, crewing called me back and stated that we were fine to operate as one of the crew had previous flying experience. After speaking to this crew member, they told me that they had previous flying experience but that it was over 10 years ago for a short period of time and on a different aircraft type. I called crewing back and advised them of what the crew member had told me but was told that it didn't matter as previous flying experience was unlimited and that it was okay to depart. With the added pressure on me, I did not want to argue but checked the Ops manual which states 3 months or equivalent sectors experience or previous flying experience was classed as experienced. All information in the manual read that it was legal to depart like this.

The flight was demanding for me as the SCCM. Not only was I trying to supervise crew with their equipment/security checks with lots of questions, but also trying to coach all of the crew with their working positions and specific roles.

After door closure, I was then prompting crew with door procedures, cabin secures and re-checking areas. After door arming, they were then asking me if their door was ok and had they done it right etc. They had completed it correctly, but being nervous on their first flight they naturally wanted to ask me.

I contacted flight safety about this on my return, to which I was told that they had all completed their SEP exams and passed so they were all capable to the same SEP standard. Again I advised that there was no experience on the flight except for myself to which they stated that I had a previous flyer onboard even though their experience was over 10 years ago.

I asked myself after the flight - were this crew all self-confident that day? No. The SCCM running around with 25 pairs of eyes is not acceptable in my opinion. Yet our company says this is acceptable. It is not fair to put this amount of pressure on a SCCM let alone the safety aspect.

CHIRP Comment: AMC's are non-binding standards adopted by EASA to illustrate the means to establish compliance with the Basic Regulation and its Implementing Rules. AMC1 Part ORO (Organisation Requirements for Air Operators).CC (Cabin Crew).100 (b) states; when scheduling cabin crew for a flight, the operator should establish procedures that take account of the experience of each cabin crew member. The procedures should specify that the required cabin crew for the flight includes some cabin crew members who have at least 3 months experience as an operating cabin crew member. The operator may have scheduled the flight with more 'experience' however a reduction in this beforehand would not prevent dispatch. Whilst this situation is not ideal, there were two cabin crew members on this flight who had 'experience'.

The AMC does not state 3 months experience with the operator and there is no timescale for when this experience occurred. This, however should be worked in conjunction with a cabin crew member's

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attestation. This is a certificate of professional competency which is issued by the operator when an initial training course has been completed. Attestations are issued with unlimited duration unless suspended or revoked by the regulator (CAA) or where the attestation holder has not flown on at least one aircraft type in the previous 60 months.

In addition to making Implementing Rules (IRs), the European Air Safety Agency (EASA) publishes Acceptable Means of Compliance (AMC) to illustrate how individuals and organisations can demonstrate that they are satisfying the intent of the rules. However, individuals and organisations can propose Alternative Means of Compliance (AltMoC) to an existing AMC or where no AMC has been established. If an operator does propose Alternative Means, the relevant national authority (e.g. the CAA in the UK) will assess them before implementing to ensure that they satisfy the intent of the rules to the same standard as the AMC. EASA will then do its own assessment of the Alternative Means and, if necessary, require changes to be made to ensure full compliance with the rules.

What does this mean in practice? For the most part CHIRP can establish whether an operator is meeting its obligations under EU law because its behaviour can be assessed against the published AMC. However, there may be cases where the operator has AltMoC accepted by the national authority, the fact that an AltMoC exists will be published and the detail included in the operator's manuals making it visible to company employees. However, as this is not available in the public domain it is not visible to CHIRP.

Not dismissing how difficult this flight must have been for the SCCM due to the reduction in the level of crew experience, all cabin crew would have demonstrated their proficiency during initial training. Service should always be secondary to operational safety and setting up galleys and bar computers is ancillary to the safe operation of the aeroplane.

This report was also passed to the company for comment, who advised that issues had occurred during the summer period because of the high number of new starter crew and the delays in obtaining security clearance for their permanent IDs. This had then meant that a lot of the new crew came online at the same time with too many 'new' crew then flying on the same flights together. The company has recognised this problem and that it was not an ideal situation, but advised that they had made sure that they had used as many experienced crew as possible and had learnt from the problems. They would ensure all initial training is brought forward next year to enable crew to gain IDs before coming online.

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