

CHIRP Cabin Crew FEEDBACK

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DISRUPTIVE PASSENGERS

Disruptive passenger incidents have been reported through the CHIRP programme by both cabin crew and flight crew on several occasions. Unruly or violent passengers can be a safety risk to the other passengers and crew on a flight. There are many causes for disruptive passenger behaviour, unfortunately a high number of reported cases have been alcohol related.

It has previously been reported that some airport shops had advised passengers that they could consume duty free alcohol when on the aircraft which then led to passengers having purchases confiscated during flight. Drinking your own alcohol on flights is not permitted by several operators; however some operators may have chosen to allow passengers to consume their own purchases during the flight as long as it is monitored by the crew onboard. A large operator recently chose to ban passengers from bringing alcohol onto certain flights to improve the comfort and safety of the passengers and cabin crew and have elected to search all passenger bags before boarding.

It is important that cabin crew remain alert and situationally aware during the boarding process so that if there are any passengers who seem to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or acting in a way that concerns the cabin crew, the situation can then be dealt with before take-off.

Cabin crew should monitor the alcohol intake of passengers throughout the flight and reserve the right to stop serving them alcohol if they believe an individual is intoxicated. If a passenger becomes unruly during flight, the SCCM and Commander should be kept informed of the situation before a decision is made on what will happen next. This could be that the aircraft is diverted to another airport and the passenger met by the police on arrival.

While on board an aircraft, passengers are not permitted to:

- Endanger the safety of an aircraft
- Be drunk in an aircraft
- Smoke
- Disobey a lawful command from the crew
- Act in a disruptive manner

It is important that all disruptive passenger incidents are properly reported to the company via the incident reporting programme so that they can be fully investigated by the company and where appropriate the passenger banned from future travel with the airline.

We have included a few reports in this edition of FEEDBACK that discuss cabin crew concerns relating to alcohol consumption on aircraft and disruptive passengers.

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CATERING RESPONSIBILITIES VS CREW RESPONSIBILITIES – ADDED STRESS DURING BOARDING

Report Text: This report refers to an increasing trend over a period of many months. I feel that punctuality targets are over-riding safety awareness.

The senior cabin crew member appears to be under pressure to board almost immediately after SEP checks are completed. The catering company is failing to complete its contracted boarding procedure - they are also making many mistakes and therefore cabin crew continue to count and check catering which is not their job according to past specifications I have seen.

On one of our larger aircraft, there is no curtain that you can draw so that passengers are not crossing through the galley. Cabin crew are therefore counting and prepping whilst saying hello to passengers with them actually apologising to the crew! We are knocked by them and their baggage/rucksacks etc. whilst trolleys are being manoeuvred.

As well as incomplete boarding procedures from the catering company, the toilets are not dressed properly and there are often cleaning issues etc. Then there are flight crew who request various tasks followed by catering top ups. During this time it is impossible to focus on who is around you, their behaviour or to focus on the doors. I was always led to believe that this was a period in time that we were expected to be calm and safety focused. It bothers me greatly that we are making ourselves increasingly vulnerable during the boarding process, that could be due to opportunism or through the fact that we are increasingly collapsing into our seats in our endeavour to complete pre-boarding tasks. Commercial interest feels as though it has over ridden safety.

Lessons Learned - The catering company's responsibilities vs crew responsibilities should be reviewed.

CHIRP Comment: It is important for crew to be focused and alert during the boarding process and monitor and welcome their passengers onboard. If there is a passenger who is acting strangely or is intoxicated, it should be during the boarding process that this is noticed. There are tasks that need to be completed by the cabin crew before the aircraft departs and unfortunately sometimes due to delays in getting to the aircraft, these tasks have to be completed during the boarding process. Crew need to be proactive in managing duties which must be completed before take-off and what is urgent. The SCCM can delegate what needs to be achieved to other crew members.

If SOPs are not being adhered to with regards to flight preparations, cleaning of the aircraft and/or delivery of meals for passengers, this needs to be highlighted to the company through the internal reporting programme so that they can investigate why standards are not being maintained by third party contractors.

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AIRPORT DRINKS PROMOTIONS

Report Text: There are drinks promotions in the duty free shops at my base for miniature spirits and quarter bottles of wine. Passengers' purchase these with the intention of drinking them onboard, at no point is the illegality of this pointed out to them during purchase in the shop. Despite PAs made onboard, passengers drink these until extremely drunk and abusive to cabin crew and passengers. Cabin crew are unable to detect these as they are the same as the brands onboard and they only come to our notice when it is too late. This sales practice should stop.

CHIRP Comment: As noted above, we have received a number of reports from crew who are worried about the amount of alcohol that can be bought and consumed whilst at the airport.

Some operators have adopted zero tolerance PAs once passengers have boarded the aircraft to remind all passengers that excessive drinking and disruptive behaviour is not acceptable and have also chosen to confiscate any alcohol that is opened during the flight. One UK operator has held discussions with the police and airport operators to ensure that all duty free staff were made aware of the consequences of passengers drinking alcoholic purchases onboard and that this is not permitted at any time by this operator.

Passengers need to be reminded of their responsibilities when on the aircraft and that it is not acceptable to ignore crew commands.

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INTOXICATED PASSENGER

Report Text: During the cruise a passenger was observed to be highly intoxicated and this information was passed on to the cabin crew serving the passenger so as to avoid any further alcohol being provided to him/her. Later during the flight, the same passenger went to the rear toilet. During toilet checks it was

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noticed that the passenger had been smoking in the toilet and had intentionally blocked a smoke detector. The Captain was informed, but no action was taken. Police did not meet aircraft.

CHIRP Comment: The reporter was urged to complete a company incident report so that the matter could be investigated further: unfortunately no response was received confirming that they had chosen to do so.

The passenger may have become intoxicated during the flight and perhaps why it had not been noted during boarding, the cabin crew member was correct to advise the SCCM and Captain so that the passenger would not be served anymore alcohol. If the passenger was not present when the smoke detector in the toilet was found to be blocked, it cannot be proved that it was in fact the same passenger who was intoxicated.

If the cabin crew member felt that the incident was not handled as it should have been, it is important to voice their concerns at the end of the flight before the cabin crew and flight crew leave the aircraft but also to report the incident to the company for investigation. There may have been a reason why the Captain chose not to inform the police, unfortunately this was not known to the reporter or the crew.

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CRM AND COMMUNICATION DURING FLIGHT

Report Text: Flight crew communicated through SCCM for cabin crew to wait so they could come into the crew briefing, then went straight to aircraft. When we boarded the aircraft no attempt was made to familiarise themselves with the crew so either the pilots and crew could identify each other if an incident or the need to enter the flight deck arose.

They had two controlled rest periods during the day flight so made it clear that the cabin crew were not to disturb them. First contact with the flight crew was on the bus to hotel at the end of the sector and even then no effort was made to introduce themselves or familiarise themselves with us. This is really poor CRM and should be highlighted so that it can be avoided, there are only a small number in the company who make no effort to have any CRM and if any incident was to occur this causes barriers.

I feel that the company no longer supports CRM training in its cost saving. Working as a team is very important and each person within the team is just as important and plays a vital role no matter who they are within this team and poor CRM needs to be stamped out as it can easily escalate into a serious unavoidable incident. This is easily avoidable not only by understanding the importance of CRM, each other's job roles but also by getting to understand each other and treating each other with respect and simply by getting to know each other just a little.

Lessons Learned - The flight deck door can easily cause a barrier and those working the other side can easily use it to not integrate, get to know or even play a part within the team.

It should be compulsory that flight crew meet the cabin crew during the briefing and set a positive tone and make it clear that during any emergency, any cabin crew can and must be made to feel confident to contact the flight crew and the door is not a barrier.

No matter what side of the door you work, we are still one team and if a barrier is created the team breaks down to two separate teams which then cannot operate fully during an incident. The Captain should head the team by leading by example.

This is an infrequent occurrence but it only needs to happen once at the wrong time and a chain of sequences can cause a serious incident.

CHIRP Comment: In the June 2015 edition of Cabin Crew FEEDBACK we printed a few reports which highlighted different failures in communication and why it is so important for a crew to communicate with each other. CHIRP frequently receives reports where CRM between the cabin crew and flight crew has broken down which could potentially cause a safety risk.

We do understand that it can be daunting for a cabin crew member to raise a query with either the SCCM or the Captain but there is a responsibility on all crew members to communicate effectively and discuss problems if they arise. It is always better to raise a question at the time of the event rather than afterwards, as there may be a simple explanation for what is happening but without asking the question in the first place, the answer will never be known.

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PASSENGERS CONSUMING OWN ALCOHOL ONBOARD

Report Text: Passengers started to board and some were found to be drinking their own alcohol whilst boarding. Passengers seated at overwing exits boarded and started to do shots whilst other passengers were boarding. All passengers informed this was not acceptable yet during flight several still got their own duty free out to drink.

Lessons Learned - Passengers need to be made more aware of what they can and can't do. Check-in agents to be more proactive with passengers at the gate.

Passengers don't care as nothing gets done to them and they have no regard for threat of police. The company should charge for alcohol on flights. The company have issued statement saying crew should serve passengers until they are inebriated and crew can't refuse unless they are drunk, surely it is too late then? Something serious will happen soon.

CHIRP Comment: The reporter advised that they had informed the company of this incident. CHIRP elected to contact the operator to discuss what communications had been sent to crew regarding serving passengers alcohol onboard.

Ultimately the passengers at the overwing exit should have been spoken to either by the cabin crew or the Captain and if deemed necessary, offloaded from the flight.

Company Comment: The comment the reporter has mentioned was included in a service notice which made reference to crew refusing drinks to passengers in general, for example those that had asked for a second drink and not to refuse them, it did not state to keep serving until passengers are intoxicated. We absolutely support the crew in their judgement if they deem that someone has had too much to drink, we would expect them to refuse alcohol and this has never wavered.

From our perspective the statistics are currently down, by approximately one quarter over the last year and this includes the introduction of free drinks on long-haul flights. Previously as an average, they have risen by approximately 10% per year. We regularly review the statistics and recognise they change on a yearly basis, we will continue to monitor them.

The issues with disruptive passengers more often than not are to do with passengers drinking their own alcohol. However, since the introduction of free drinks on long-haul flights and the fact that the statistics appear to have dropped, it would indicate that from a disruptive perspective the fact that the cabin crew give out free drinks and monitor the consumption it would appear to be working.

This is an industry wide issue, the Airport Police Commanders Group, Airport Retailers, Airline Operators, BATA and AOA are all working together to attempt to resolve this issue and look at why people become disruptive, they are all taking part in this initiative which is a long-term study. All areas of the customer journey have a part to play in dealing with disruptive behaviour and monitoring alcohol consumption where applicable.

As a company we have information in the terms and conditions on booking and also in the inflight magazine to remind passengers about being intoxicated on-board.

As an airline we take disruptive behaviour very seriously and as mentioned previously, support our cabin crew in their decision not to serve alcohol to anyone who appears intoxicated.

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Reports received by CHIRP are accepted in good faith. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of editorials, analyses and comments published in FEEDBACK, please remember that CHIRP does not possess any executive authority.

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