

CHIRP Cabin Crew FEEDBACK

Issue No: 63**June 2017**

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ROSTER CONCERNS AND FATIGUE

Over the past few months we have seen a large increase in Cabin Crew reports submitted to CHIRP. A high number of these reports have related to roster concerns and whether a particular duty is compliant or not. With the individual reporter’s consent, a selection of disidentified rosters and duties have been passed to the CAA for review. It has then been confirmed by the CAA that these duties have been planned in accordance with EASA FTLs and the companies’ industrial agreement. It is worth noting that each company’s industrial agreement is different and unfortunately, we do not have access to these.

The question of whether a crew member is suffering from the effects of fatigue is discussed frequently in cabin crew reports. Some cabin crew have advised that at the time of reporting for a duty they have felt so tired that they did not think they could complete their duty to the best of their ability, however they have chosen to operate either because they feel that they cannot report fatigued or because they have felt they are unable to refuse to operate. It is up to the individual crew member to assess whether they feel that they can safely complete their duty and the tasks that are asked of them, if they cannot, it is their responsibility not to operate.

Several crew members have called in sick instead of reporting fatigued, which means that even though they have been suffering from fatigue, the incident has not been recorded as such and therefore the operator will be unable to investigate the claim. When a crew member reports fatigued to a company, an investigation will normally start and this should be expected by the crew member – it is a positive action! The company need to find out what factors led to the crew member reporting fatigued – is it the published or achieved rosters, a particular trip pairing, an underlying symptom of an illness or is it their lifestyle? All required paperwork/reports should also be completed for the company so that the amount of fatigue reports that are submitted can be analysed and mitigations put in place.

It is important for all crew members to check their rosters thoroughly as soon as they are issued. Any abnormalities or fatigue concerns should be reported to the company before the roster period is commenced. These concerns should be reported to scheduling in the first instance, but it is also beneficial to report concerns via the company reporting programme as well. The reports submitted through the company reporting programme will highlight any potential problems with rostering processes and also mean that the company can conduct trend analysis and compile a database of such claims.

A high number of the reports that have been received in the past few months could not be disidentified to be able to print them in Cabin Crew FEEDBACK. The roster examples that have been supplied have been specific to a particular operator and could therefore infer the identity of both the reporter and the company.

WHAT CAN I REPORT TO CHIRP?



Safety related incidents or events involving yourself, other people, your company or companies you work with.



Incidents or events including errors, individual performance, regulatory issues and unsafe working practices.



Incidents or events with no safety content, conflicts or personalities and industrial relations issues including terms and conditions of contracts.

In Edition 61 of Cabin Crew FEEDBACK, we highlighted the importance of reporting safety concerns to operators' as well as through the CHIRP programme. Any issues relating to a specific issue with an aircraft, an incident or a safety hazard at work, need to be reported to the company so that the matter can be investigated and if necessary, the problem rectified.

For us to be able to discuss concerns with operators', we need the individual reporters' permission to do so. Without this, we cannot progress with the concerns raised and have no choice but to close the report. The reporter's identity is only known to CHIRP and only held on file whilst the report is open. On closing, all personal details of the reporter are removed from our records.

All reporters who submit their concerns through the CHIRP programme will receive a response from us; even if they have specified that they do not need one. If we have not replied to you, it could be that we haven't received your report, so please email us at reports@chirp.co.uk and we can check to make sure it has been received.

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PUSHBACK WITH PASSENGERS STANDING

Report Text: We were boarding a really busy flight. People were standing in the aisle as they were struggling to find space to put their bags in the lockers when the dispatcher decided to close the aircraft door. The Captain then pushed back with people still standing and bags in the aisle.

Lessons Learned - They should wait until everybody is seated and the bags safely put away. We shouldn't put punctuality ahead of safety. In the event of an evacuation all those bags in the aisle are a hazard.

CHIRP Comment: The CAA issued [Safety Notice SN2011/05](#) in June 2011 due to an increasing number of reports on excess cabin baggage and its storage in non-approved stowages. The purpose of the notice was to remind operators of the need to ensure that baggage was secured safely in a manner which did not endanger aircraft safety.

The decision to pushback could have been made because the flight crew were unaware of the situation in the cabin. Proactive communication between the cabin crew, flight crew and ground staff is essential in managing situations with excess cabin baggage. Cabin crew should refer to their Operations Manual for the specific company procedure. However the SCCM, if at all possible, should not permit the aircraft door(s) to be closed until they are satisfied that cabin baggage has been stowed and that they are content with the safety of the situation within the cabin, with all passengers seated. They need to relay the problems with cabin baggage to the flight crew and confirm that the doors should not be closed until rectified. If, for any reason, the doors are closed without the SCCM's agreement, the Captain should be advised that passengers are still standing, some cabin baggage needs to be stowed and request that pushback is not started until these issues are resolved.

The ground staff will be aware of how busy the flight is and they should be keeping track of what the passengers are carrying onto the aircraft and whether it is too large to stow in the cabin. Once boarding has been completed, it would be beneficial to advise the ground staff that the baggage has been too large or hard to stow as a reminder that it needs to be checked before the passengers board the aircraft.

Reporting these types of concerns to the company is very important so that the operator can keep track of incidents and investigate why they have happened. If they are not reported to the company, they will be unaware of the issues faced on a daily basis.

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THE USE OF COMMANDER'S DISCRETION – UNDERSTANDING OF THE REGULATION

Report Text: The SCCM asked us in addition to our standard SEP and Security checks to check the toilet packs and headphones onboard the aircraft as we have had problems with the cleaning company not loading enough stock. Having checked this, there were not enough toilet amenities to enable us to depart so we had to call for more stock to be delivered. This took quite a while and after about 4 hours, the flight crew reached their maximum FDP and the Commander was not happy to use discretion from home base in case they needed to use it later on.

New flight crew were called from standby. After speaking to the original Commander, they expressed that they would not use any discretion from home base because it should be used in 'extenuating circumstances' or words to that effect. We checked the maximum FDP and use of Commander's Discretion and there was some confusion as to whether you could use three hours of discretion from home base with three flight crew or whether you could only use two hours of discretion. These confusions were never addressed and still remain.

The departing Commander advised that it would be up to the new Commander to decide whether or not to use their discretion to extend our FDP to cover the duty. When the new Commander arrived, they asked how the crew were and the SCCM explained that a number of the crew felt tired and as if they would rather leave. Their response was something along the lines of, if the crew want to offload themselves then they can.

Having reported at 1220 for the duty with an original departure time of 1340, our actual departure time was 1827 with a flight time of 9 hours. This meant a duty of 16 hours and 7 minutes.

On the crew transport, the Commander informed us that we'd gone into discretion by 2 hours and 37 minutes and thanked us for our hard work.

When at breakfast the next morning, the Commander explained that if we had stood ourselves down and not used discretion, there would have been no other crew to call from standby as they were all currently being used. With this in mind, there would have been no other option but to cancel the flight completely.

My main points to make in this situation are:

1. The Commander did not come and speak to us all as crew and make an informed decision, they took a rather blasé approach to the use of discretion.
2. Being at our home base, is it ethical to use Commander's Discretion when there should be crew on standby ready to re-crew the aircraft?
3. The Commander allowed an external situation - no crew to call from standby and the possibility of having to cancel the flight - to impact their decision making when deciding whether or not to use discretion.

In this situation, the Airport Duty Manager was dismissive as to there being a situation regarding cabin crew duty period extension and once the situation was explained, the company expected the Commander to use their discretion in order to support the operation.

Lessons Learned – Commander's should be impartial and not allow external factors to impact on their decision making. Crew - if they have concerns should voice them/express their concern to extending the duty.

CHIRP Comment: The Use of Commander's Discretion is a subject that has been raised several times in cabin crew reports submitted through the CHIRP programme. Since the EASA FTL implementation, these reports have increased, which could be due to a misunderstanding of the regulation.

EASA FTL states that the conditions to modify the limits on flight duty, duty and rest periods by the Commander in the case of unforeseen circumstances in flight operations, which start at or after the reporting time, shall comply with the following:

- i. The maximum daily FDP may not be increased by more than 2 hours unless the flight crew has been augmented, in which case the maximum flight period may be increased by not more than 3 hours;
- ii. If on the final sector within an FDP the allowed increase is exceeded because of unforeseen circumstances after take-off, the flight may continue to the planned destination or alternate aerodrome; and
- iii. The rest period following the FDP may be reduced but can never be less than 10 hours.

The regulation states that the Commander 'shall consult their crew' on alertness levels but does not specify how this should be completed. Depending on the size of the aircraft and the amount of cabin crew

onboard, it may be hard for the Commander to complete this so they often liaise with the SCCM or they could make a PA to the crew to advise by how long they are likely to go into discretion. The decision to use the discretion period should not be made by the scheduling department and if cabin crew are not content to do this, they should advise the SCCM and the Commander before departure.

In the situation reported, the cabin crew could operate into two hours discretion as the flight crew was not augmented. Commander's Discretion should only be used for unforeseen circumstances which are out of the operator's control, departure from home base using discretion should be avoided as the company should have sufficient standby crew available to cover delayed flights if needed.

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FLIGHT CREW CONTROLLED REST

Report Text: Three flight crew operating with one flight crew member in the bunks. The other two flight crew informed me that they were taking controlled rest. At the end of the controlled rest period, I entered the flight deck and saw the mattress from the spare bunk had been taken off and was on the floor in the flight deck behind the flight crew seats, along with pillows and blankets.

I did not witness anyone laying/sleeping on it but it appeared that it had been used during the controlled rest period. Therefore, one flight crew member was in the bunks and possibly a second flight crew member on the floor on the mattress on the flight deck with one flight crew member in the seat operating the flight.

Lessons Learned - If this practice was the case, it needs to be made clear whether this is acceptable re: safety of the aircraft and passengers and crew. If not, communication should be sent to all flight crew to be advised. A message to all cabin crew to monitor and report such practice.

CHIRP Comment: Controlled Rest is sometimes referred to as 'in seat napping' and is used by most UK operators. It is the process where the flight crew can take short periods of sleep whilst temporarily being relieved of operational duties in accordance with company prescribed 'controlled rest' procedures. It should be used during periods of reduced cockpit workload i.e. during cruise and has been proved to increase the levels of alertness during the critical stages of flight (take-off and landing).

Some longer range aircraft have designated rest areas for the flight crew to use - as mentioned in the report above - and they should only be used when there are more than two flight crew rostered to operate the flight. This primarily occurs when the maximum allowable flight duty period requires an additional pilot to complete the flight. The rest periods will be planned between the flight crew and should be communicated to the cabin crew before the flight.

'In seat napping' and bunk rest should not be conducted at the same time; unless the company procedures state otherwise, as when there are three flight crew rostered on a flight, two flight crew should always be present in the flight deck. The procedure for Controlled Rest is detailed within the company Operations Manual and should the procedure not be adhered to, this should be reported to the company for further investigation. There is a health and safety implication with moving the mattresses and pillows from the bunks into the flight deck; if the flight crew become incapacitated during flight, the mattress would hinder the cabin crew providing medical assistance to them.

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ABILITY TO ACHIEVE A BREAK DURING FDP

Report Text: Our Company has recently introduced a new service. There are only two crew members completing the service at the back of aircraft which can hold up to 150 passengers. The new service can now take two hours. The issue is not the new procedure itself but the problems that are arising because of it.

I became very dehydrated on a long flight as I did not eat or drink all day – 11+ hours – as we could not take a break. No rest breaks are ever achieved. I have heard this from many colleagues that this is happening on most flights.

CHIRP Comment: We have received many similar reports on this new procedure and all reporters have been encouraged to report their concerns to the Operator so that they are aware of all the issues raised. The Company has advised that they are aware of the problems that are occurring and have asked for cabin crew members to continue to report their concerns directly to the company.

EASA FTL Regulation ORO.FTL.240 states that 'During the FDP there shall be the opportunity for a meal and drink in order to avoid any detriment to a crew member's performance, especially when the FDP

exceeds 6 hours'. Each operator should specify in their Operations Manual how the crew member's nutrition during FDP is ensured.

The operating SCCM is responsible for managing breaks to ensure that they are achieved, if the length of a duty permits an inflight break. However, if a crew member knows that they are entitled to a break and it seems that it will be difficult to achieve it, should speak up and advise the SCCM so that it can be planned within the duty.

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CHARGING OF ELECTRICAL DEVICES ON AN AIRCRAFT

Report Text: During the flight, when passengers were sleeping, I was woken up by a crew member accusing me of charging items that I was not using. I said to them not to worry as I was not charging anything but they continued to accuse me and raised their voice. I showed them that I only had a cable in the charging point but that nothing was plugged into it. I explained it was simply a cable and that maybe it was drawing a current but I was not sure. This was raised to the senior cabin crew member who took no action at all.

CHIRP Comment: Some aircraft types have charging points in the seats which enables passengers to charge electronic devices during the flight. Each operator should have an operational policy for the charging of electronic devices during flight and all cabin crew should be aware of this. For safety purposes, it is recommended that items are removed from the charging point if they are not in use. A cable plugged into a charging point may still be able to draw a current, so if there is not a device attached to it, the passenger should be asked to remove the charger from the charging point.

Electrical sockets situated in the galley and/or by the aircraft doors should not be used for charging electrical devices during flight as the current supplied to these sockets is stronger and these points are primarily used for cleaning equipment.

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