CHIRP Cabin Crew FEEDBACK

Edition 72 - September 2020

It has been an unprecedented year for the aviation industry due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many staff have been furloughed, with some still yet to return to their duties whether these be in the air or on the ground. This has understandably caused much stress and worry for many as this has affected home lives, monthly pay and quite possibly future commitments and job security. In addition to the Government furlough scheme, some operators have also had to make the difficult decision as to whether they will need to make some of their staff redundant.

We are aware that the threat of both voluntary and compulsory redundancy has affected many UK cabin crew and flight crew over the past few months and CHIRP has received several reports raising concerns, including how such decisions are made. It is for an operator and the relevant Union to work together to come to an agreement as to how redundancy decisions are made and communicated to staff, which must also be in line with any employment law requirements. As a result, CHIRP has been limited in how we can assist with these reported concerns because we cannot become involved in industrial or company matters or suggest how an operator should assess their staff for redundancy. It is our role to ensure that safety concerns are passed to the relevant body for further investigation and action, so we have kept the CAA notified of concerns raised in reports for their oversight.

Other reporters have highlighted concerns about the procedures that have been put in place by operators for when cabin crew and flight crew return to flying duties. They have queried whether these are within the Government guidelines and whether it is safe for them to return to work. Importantly with many crew having been on furlough for extended periods and airline schedules being heavily reduced, it is worth highlighting the requirement to fully re-familiarise yourself with both your company's procedures and the relevant aircraft type before operating, as well as the aircraft environment (such as location of equipment) when you return to flying.

Unfamiliar experiences such as wearing full PPE can lead to distractions on board, so we must be mindful to remain situational aware of our surroundings and confident in the tasks that we are required to complete.

The current climate is challenging for cabin crew and passengers, so it is now even more important that you continue to report any concerns you may have to ensure that flight safety is not compromised. Some cabin crew may feel under pressure to either return to flying duties or to operate when they are not fit to do so because they fear the implications of being ill during a time when their company may be assessing staff for redundancy. You must not operate if you are not fit to fly: safety must always come first.

As stress, anxiety and depression levels soar during COVID-19, it's important to support one another and to work together as a team. Looking out for one another has never been more important.

The not-for-profit International Flight Safety Foundation (of which the independent UK Flight Safety Committee is a part of), have produced a series of safety toolkits and 'punch lists' that provide a useful handrail and food for thought about the various aspects of airline operations. Many of these are focused on overall operational management, but there are useful nuggets for daily operations as well. As part of their work, they have also produced 'An Aviation Professional's Guide to Wellbeing' – well worth a look to reflect on personal stresses and read some thoughts on how to help you cope.

CHANGES AT CHIRP

This will be the last Cabin Crew FEEDBACK that I will produce for a while because, I will be taking maternity leave starting at the end of October. We started recruitment for maternity cover for the role of Cabin Crew Programme Manager in August with interviews being completed at the beginning of September. We were overwhelmed by the amount of interest we received; by the closing date for applications, we had received over 65 emails of interest and a further 48 complete applications. The experience of all the applicants was very strong and therefore it was a hard job to select candidates for interviews. We would like to express our thanks to all of those who took the time to complete such detailed applications for the role.

We are now pleased to announce that the successful candidate who will be covering my maternity leave is Jennifer Curran. Having flown on both longhaul and shorthaul aircraft for numerous airlines, she has gained over 16 years' experience in aviation. Whilst primarily being cabin crew, she has also worked in other roles including purser, line trainer, NVQ assessor and quality auditor. Along with being familiar with cabin crew procedures and requirements Jennifer has extensive knowledge of DfT requirements, CAA standards and EASA FTLs.

I will be leaving the cabin crew programme in her very capable hands, with her being the main point of contact regarding all cabin crew safety concerns from now on. Stephanie Dykes Cabin Crew Programme Manager

Flight crew failed to follow company procedures and contact the cabin crew when on Controlled Rest

Report Text: This occurred at cruise. As per the rule, we are supposed to contact the flight crew every half hour. During cruise, the SCCM contacts the flight crew on the hour and then the cabin crew make contact on the half hour.

At some point during the flight we were informed by the flight crew they would go on Controlled Rest and they could contact us every half hour. But from 04:00 to 07:00 GMT the flight crew failed to call us at the stipulated time. We waited 10 minutes after the agreed time before we called the flight crew.

It is normal that sometimes they may forget to call but this was 6 consecutive times where they failed to contact us. Whilst we don't know whether both were asleep or purely that they just forgot, it was a bit worrying that they failed to call the crew at the agreed time.

CHIRP Comment: It is unusual to receive reports of this nature. CHIRP responded to the reporter's concerns and included information regarding the use of Controlled Rest by flight crew during flights.

Where only 2 flight crew are present in the flight deck, Controlled Rest should only be used for short periods of time (typically up to 45 minutes per individual) to combat unexpected tiredness during flight.

Although the overall flight deck might be under Controlled Rest conditions for longer than 45 minutes, the main point is that during periods of Controlled Rest, the Captain must ensure that one flight crew member remains awake at all times, and the flight crew should have ensured that they make the agreed calls to the cabin crew during that period. If the flight crew are on Controlled Rest but have not contacted the cabin crew at the intervals as specified in the company Operations Manual, the cabin crew should instead contact them.

If you feel uncomfortable with anything that may have occurred during the flight; please query this with the operating SCCM or flight crew during the flight. They can then explain the procedure in more detail and give reasons for whatever has occurred.

Events such as this should however be reported to the company after landing so that they can be investigated. This will establish whether this is a routinely occurring issue, or a one-off incident and the cause of the event.

CPR procedures and guidance from the company

Report Text: The aisles are very narrow on two of our aircraft and don't allow for passengers or crew to easily pass through the cabin. Currently, there's little guidance from the company on how CPR can be achieved safely or effectively. We don't practise this in a mock-up. Naturally, before this event occurs/happens we need an effective consideration, training and procedure in all eventualities for carrying this out.

Whilst training, I raised the issue and was told to put the casualty on the floor in the cabin but this was not demonstrated. Just getting the casualty out of the seat will be problematic. Once on the floor it's hard to understand how anyone could place themselves

to the side or astride the casualty. Meaning that the crew need to make their way to a galley area. I cannot see how this can all be achieved without injury to crew. Furthermore, if with every passing minute the chances of recovery are reduced by 10% so valuable time will be lost without an effective plan of action.

CHIRP Comment: The cabin crew member had already reported their concerns to the company but requested that CHIRP further query the procedures. The company advised that the specifics for each location onboard the aircraft are not covered in training.

The sooner chest compressions begin, the greater the potential for a positive outcome. CPR should be completed wherever the casualty collapses on the aircraft.

If a crew member is unable to complete chest compressions where the casualty has collapsed, the crew would then need to make the decision as to whether the casualty is to be moved to a place where CPR can be completed. They must balance the risk of moving the passenger with the effectiveness of completing CPR whilst remaining where they are, considering the safety of all onboard.

CHIRP also elected to discuss the concerns raised with the CAA. Although the report does not identify non-compliance with regulatory requirements for aircraft type specific and operator conversion training, an operator has the responsibility to for ensure training is not only compliant, but also effective, and instructors are responsible for delivering training in accordance with the applicable syllabus. The method and effectiveness of training syllabi is currently the subject of CAA oversight.

The CAA confirmed that the minimum aisle width is specified by certification requirements which are intended to ensure the rapid evacuation of the aircraft. Practical CPR training is required to take account of the aircraft environment, and although it is not expected that practical training includes all cabin configurations, the considerations that may be presented

by some aircraft configurations should be covered in the operator's conversion and recurrent training.

What would you do if a passenger had collapsed in the toilet?

How would you go about moving the passenger to a place where you can provide the care that they need?

There are only so many scenarios that can be practised during training, so to support this and your own situational awareness you should consider what you might do in different locations on the aircraft. It will always be harder to access casualties who have collapsed in a smaller area and unfortunately, it may result in having to either lift or drag the passenger to a place where you can complete CPR.

It is worth noting that some operators provide 'drag mats' onboard aircraft – please refer to your company manual for more information - and these can be used to move a casualty to a place where you can then complete CPR. Company manuals also provide advice on manual handling techniques, which should be referred to and used in situations such as this to protect yourself from injury. When administering CPR, adrenaline will take-over and crew who have been in these situations usually report that their previous training kicks in.

Drone sighting on approach to base

Report Text: At both rear doors and as crew were sat for landing into home base, both crew members saw a drone by the aircraft which then went under the aircraft and appeared at the other side.

The flight crew were informed after landing. The cabin crew were asked if perhaps they had seen a helicopter; they confirmed that it was not a helicopter. One of the crew member's sons is a police officer who flies drones.

Both flight crew seemed very uninterested and cabin crew were not sure that they would even bother to report the incident. Too much paperwork after landing perhaps?

CHIRP Comment: Unfortunately, the cabin crew member who reported this event did not report their concerns to the company after landing, which meant that it could not be followed up with the operating flight crew. CHIRP referred the report to both the CAA and the UK Airprox Board for their comments and also passed it to the CHIRP Air Transport Advisory Board for their view.

Advising the flight crew of the event when the incident occurred may have been a distraction to them, as they would be preparing to land. However, the information may have been helpful to ATC after landing so that they could inform other aircraft that were also preparing to land.

If a cabin crew member spots a drone, what should they do about it?

The flight crew should not be disturbed during a critical phase of flight unless it is an emergency BUT they should be made aware of the event on landing and the event be reported to the company. As much information as possible about the drone (colour, size etc) should be relayed to the flight crew so that they can then determine as to whether they need to submit an Airprox report. Irrespective, flight crew should always be receptive to cabin crew reports to ensure they are not discouraged from reporting other events in future. Cabin crew should feel confident when discussing or reporting concerns to the flight crew.

Possible Ice on the wing on take-off

Report Text: I am a [] Captain on the A320 and regularly fly into []. On this day I was a passenger on an [] flight. I boarded via the rear steps and, although dark and the lighting was poor, I noted a discolouration all along the trailing edge of the left wing. On taking my seat I could see the right wing and in better light and it looked like ice or condensation again all along the trailing edge. The OAT was 1 deg C.

The cabin was filling up with passengers but the middle was clear with two cabin crew chatting, so I approached in a friendly way as any passenger would and said "I was wondering why the wing was that colour at the back?". They looked through the window and said, "Oh yes, I don't know." After a pause I then asked, "Could it be ice?" To which the female cabin crew member said, "Well maybe, but I'm sure the Captain's checked it and I'm sure it's fine." That wasn't the response I was hoping for so I said, "Do you mind checking with the Captain and letting me know what he says?" I sensed she wasn't very happy! After boarding was complete the cabin crew member came back and said, "It's been checked and it's fine." I looked out at the wing and replied in a surprised way "Really?" At that point, my friend next to me who was closer to the cabin crew member said quietly, "Just to let you know he is a [] Captain." She replied "Oh!" turned around and walked straight back to the flight deck.

A short while later the Captain did his welcome aboard PA and finished it by saying "To the passenger who asked about ice on the wings we've checked it and there isn't any!" Not how I would have handled it I thought but at least it was resolved. Maybe it was just condensation after all.

I'm still not sure if the photos I have show ice on the wing. Did the flight crew even see the discolouration? I have the Captain's word that the wing was checked by the refueller. Did the refueller check the front AND rear edge? I don't know. But I do know that rather than experiencing an open safety culture what I experienced was very worrying. I thought to myself, next time a passenger raises a concern I'm not going anywhere until I've spoken to them personally.

CHIRP Comment: This report was referred to the operator for further comment. They advised that they were disappointed to learn of this report and would have expected the flight crew and cabin crew to have dealt with it differently. The company confirmed that a reminder was sent to crew to highlight this as part of the risks of winter operations. The cabin crew member dismissed the passenger's comments and assumed the Captain had already checked the wings. Any comments made in the cabin must be passed on to the flight crew; regardless of whether the person reporting the concerns has experience operating aircraft.

All concerns should be treated seriously and communicated, as in the case of contamination on the wings it is imperative that reviewed by the flight crew before departure.

We printed a similar report in Cabin Crew FEEDBACK Edition 70, where a cabin crew member had raised concerns to the Captain that there was contamination on the wings before take-off. However, in that situation the Captain reacted positively to the concerns that were raised and explained why the decision had been made not to de-ice the aircraft wings.

It is important to communicate, double check and provide feedback to the passenger thanking them for reporting their concerns. Ensure that passengers know that you take safety seriously, otherwise next time they may stay silent.

Contact Us

CHIRP
One Kingdom Street
Paddington Central
London
W2 6BD
01252 378947
www.chirp.co.uk