



CHIRP Cabin Crew FEEDBACK

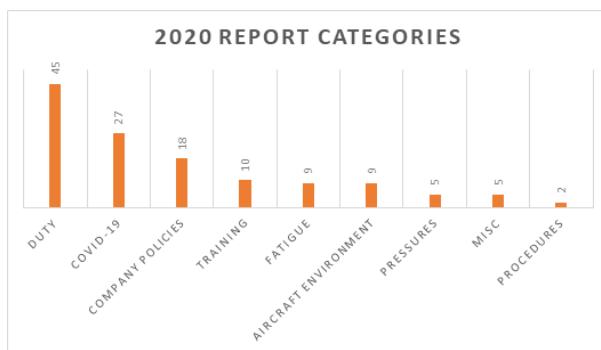
Edition 73 - February 2021

Editorial

A belated Happy New Year to all our readers and many thanks to all the reporters who took the time to submit their report to CHIRP in 2020.

As I write the first draft of Cabin Crew FEEDBACK, CHIRP received 134 safety related reports in 2020 vs 617 in 2019. COVID-19 is continuing to have a huge impact on the aviation industry, and with the reduced amount of flying, this has seen a corresponding reduction of reports to CHIRP. Hopefully, sooner rather than later the industry will start to improve and I'm sure the volume of CHIRP reports in the coming year will reflect that recovery.

As you can see from the chart below, most CHIRP reports received in 2020 related to Duty. The Duty category includes duty length, duration of rest down route, tiring rostering practices, discretion and noisy crew hotels.



The next highest report category was COVID-19, it included concerns regarding social distancing measures onboard crew transport, COVID-19 testing down-route, stocks of PPE and the furlough scheme. The category of Company Policies included increased passenger hand luggage allowance, its associated stowage and handling considerations, reduced crew complement and CPR procedures. The Training category included concerns about working on multiple aircraft variants, return to flying, reduction in length of recurrent courses and conversion courses.

For the remainder, Fatigue only includes reports where a reporter has specified fatigue in the report; Aircraft Environment covered expired fire extinguishers, noise and/or vibration on the aircraft and defective aircraft systems such as seatbelt signs; Pressures included reports about changes to services routines and its associated interaction with passengers; Miscellaneous included reports such as drone sightings and duty of care; and finally Procedures included crew missing safety checks.

Did you know that CHIRP works independently from UK operators and the CAA? Therefore, it is pivotal that any safety concerns are reported to the operator in the first instance as well as to CHIRP.

The best way for a company to identify a potential, or actual problem is by analysis of their own reports. Without data from safety reports, operators may not be aware of any concerns and therefore are not able to rectify them even though CHIRP may have received a number of reports about it.

Safety concerns should be raised promptly, there is often a time frame that an internal report must be completed within. The more clear and concise information that you can put on a report the better. Operators are best placed to effect a change (if required) or to prevent a recurrence. Before completing a report, think about what the safety implication is. It can be difficult and feel uncomfortable to make a distinction between safety and industrial issues as the effect on the crews could be the same. CHIRP is not affiliated with any airline and therefore matters related to your terms and conditions of employment should be raised directly to your company and/or your trade union.

48% of 2020 CHIRP reporters did not report their concerns to their company.

In addition to the 134 safety reports received, CHIRP also received 61 reports that had no safety content. These reports have included not being able to leave the hotel when down-route, allowances and NHS test and trace.



COVID-19 has unfortunately been prevalent for about a year now and caused thousands of crew to be furloughed. Many operators have ensured that there are tools available to support crew during these challenging times. Each crew member has a personal responsibility, in accordance with EASA Regulation, to make sure that they are familiar with their SOPs and aircraft specifics prior to their duty, this is particularly important at the current time after a period of not flying, or reduced level of flying.

In the latest edition of the Air Transport FEEDBACK the Director Aviation wrote –

'Although it's true that crews are often constituted in larger companies from people who may not have met before, even if you do know each other the pre-flight brief is an important time to understand who has recently done what and talk about the pressures and stresses that everyone might be under – and that includes all the crew, flight deck and cabin. After an honest appraisal, who is best placed to fly that first sector, who really needs that landing, what support do the cabin crew need given that they might also not be firing on all cylinders due to lack of recency? Focussing on the job in hand is vital from pre-flight to end of flight; it's easy to say, but external worries, issues and extraneous conversations need to be left outside the 'sterile' cockpit environment so that all attention can be given to the complex task of operating the aircraft'. The underlying message is no different for the cabin side of the flight deck door. It is crucial as a crew to communicate with each other, to help each other and to work as a team. Some senior crew have also been furloughed for long periods of time too, support and communication works both ways.



In the current pandemic many of us have experienced stresses and strains, each person's experience being different to the next. The mental health of even the most resilient people has been tested, for a variety of reasons including job security, recency, home pressures, financial worries, home-schooling or family health, in the words of poet John Donne 'No man is an island' (or woman).

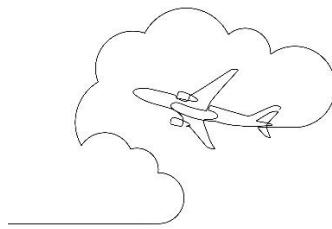
If you feel like you need to talk to someone, be that at home, at work including if down route then most companies have some form of programme where you can get support regardless of the hour. Psychologists, Mental Health Ambassadors, Peer Support Groups or Mental Health First Aiders, whatever name they go by are there to help and are specially trained to support you. Please refer to your own companies' policies for more details.

Should your company not have a peer support programme in place, or you'd rather speak to someone completely independent you could contact <https://aviationaction.org/>

Remember, it's OK to not be OK.

The majority of cabin crew have been furloughed at some point, some for nearly a year and understandably may be feeling nervous or apprehensive about returning to flying. It is therefore important that you prepare for this and refresh your knowledge before returning. Take advantage of any resources available to you, there may be support/knowledge refresh packages supplied by your company, and of course your company procedures manuals. The environment is different to how it was pre COVID-19 and that in itself will take some getting used to, wearing PPE, social distancing and adapted procedures. Some crew may be on different aircraft types due to company restructuring. All changes that have been happening since last spring.

Be considerate to your colleagues, work together, be a team and most of all, stay safe.



Reports

ROSTERING DUTIES OF 24hrs+

Report Text:

are currently using COVID as an excuse to roster its crew and pilots duties which should be illegal. Operating a 12+hr duty, a full flight, then having to remain at the airport for 3-4 hours while the plane is being turned around/re-catered/cleaned. Then making the crew position home in an upright seat, on a full flight for another 10 hours to then complete their journeys home. The crew community have been understanding in operating EASA alleviation flights, but this is now becoming more frequent and is being done so the company do not have to pay for crew allowances/hotel rooms etc. Total disregard for the health, safety, and well-being of the cabin crew. It is extremely unsafe and inhumane to expect crew to be on duty for 24hrs+. If there are no local quarantine restrictions in place in the arrival country, there is no reason to position the crew straight home.

CHIRP Comment: *In EASA FTLs there is no restriction on how long a crew member can position after an operational duty. In this particular case, the FDP does not require extension as this is a positioning sector in accordance with ORO.FTL.210 & ORO.FTL.215, as the FDP has finished and they are no longer operating as a crew member, although this time will still contribute to their total duty hours limits at 7/14/28 days as per ORO.FTL.210.*

Pre-COVID-19 it wasn't unusual practice for aircraft to be operated out to a destination, to then be positioned home empty a few hours later, or for the aircraft to be brought back to base with new passengers and new crew, the previous crew having to position home. This practice wasn't due to local COVID-19 restrictions but for commercial reasons, there may not have been another flight back for several days or the local HOTAC was below standard for example. It's less common in scheduled airlines but can happen on a regular basis with charter operators.

During the COVID-19 pandemic many operators have had to change their normal working practices significantly, with some applying for FTL Temporary Exemptions under Article 71(1) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 (the basic Regulation) to extend the basic FDP limits and rest requirements to support essential services to continue. All FTL Exemptions granted are being monitored and reviewed by the operators and the CAA. Each Exemption approved by the CAA is specific to a route and has an expiry date.

Here's one example of an FTL Exemption - a 12-13hr flight, turnaround is 90 mins, there is an outbound and inbound crew, outbound is fire watch only (made up of 2-4 crew) while the inbound crew rest for the whole way out either in crew rest in a lie flat bed in the cabin or in the crew rest provision and then operate home.

Some operators require their crew to stay at an address within 90 mins of the airport before operating one of these extended there and back duties. All crew should complete a Fatigue

report / Alertness form so that these trips can be monitored by the operator and provided to the CAA for review. Should you arrive back to base and feel like you are too tired to drive home, then please ask your operator as they may offer HOTAC on arrival.

DOWN-ROUTE CONFINEMENT

Report Text:

I wanted to contact you with regards to the current ### trip. CC are required to have the 90 minute COVID-19 test prior to departure and a further test on arrival in ###. All of my crew were on a 5 day trip and tested negative, however, we are bound to room confinement for the duration of the stay. The outbound duty was over 18 hours because of the extra time required for testing, we were then escorted to the hotel without any option for fresh air. The total amount of time in the room before reporting is 54 hours. Not only is this extremely lonely, but it is also incredibly unhealthy. I didn't have any fresh air from lunchtime on the day of report (Thursday) until I got back to my car on Monday morning. The windows in the room did not open and there was no balcony. There are no cooking facilities besides a kettle, therefore, it is only possible to order from the hotel or an external source, which is a very expensive option. The rooms are not cleaned, and bins only changed on request. I don't feel this is acceptable, there should be a space for the crew to mix if there is still reason to be confined after two negative tests. The company should be providing some form of compensation for food as we have no choice in leaving our room.

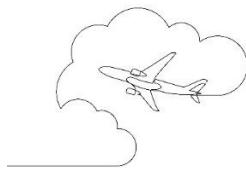
CHIRP Comment: *Operators are governed by the Law and Regulations of the country they operate to. Some destinations are stricter than others. Crew should be practising social distancing where possible. If you are concerned about the duration of these trips, then please complete your company's safety report and fatigue or alertness form to feedback your concerns. The operator must balance the legal / regulatory requirements with the welfare of their crew. There may be long duties where sometimes crew will be required to position back to base, and sometimes it will be necessary to remain down-route.*

There are numerous considerations for an operator when deciding how to crew and operate a 'there and back'. The type and location of accommodation is paramount, not to mention if a crew member should test positive down-route for COVID-19, or if they receive a message from NHS Test and Trace when they land. Is there suitable medical assistance if required? What if the entry requirements change overnight and there are crew night stopping? Are crew exempt from any restrictions in the country? What if there's a COVID breakout in the hotel?

Compared to the previous report (Rostering Duties of 24hr+), it's clear that there are pros and cons with both types of trips, neither ideal; whilst one crew member may enjoy the opportunity to catch up on a boxset or two, the other may have preferred to fly straight back home, each crew member will have their own preference.

ICAO have produced a detailed document covering why test and quarantine is used. Below is the link to this document that some readers may find interesting. Many of these documents are written with the input of global stakeholders - not least people who do the job. Crew are part of the process in writing these documents.

[ICAO Doc 10152 Manual on Testing and Cross-border Risk Management Measures](#)



NOISE AND VIBRATION ON THE AIRCRAFT DURING THE FLIGHT

Report Text:

At the top of climb we get this humming sound across the whole aircraft, but it is more noticeable from doors 2 to 3. When you get to row 12 you can hear it, when you get to row 17 it gets very loud with a roaring sound along with some vibration, get to row 21 and the passengers can't hear each other talking, let alone any announcements over the PA. This only happens when you have passengers on. It was fine on the ferry leg outbound. If it was a one off, then it would be bearable, but the aircraft has been flying around for over a week now with this and it has been doing long sectors. Many passengers have had concerns.

CHIRP Comment: *The CHIRP contact advised that the defect was intermittent and would disappear for months at a time. Engineers revisited areas of the aircraft structure and carried out checks in accordance with AML (aircraft maintenance log) and fault isolation manuals. Engineers were also tasked with flying on the aircraft to try and locate the origin of the noise. The aircraft was removed from service for the purpose of test flights, but the defect did not appear. Further advice was sought from the manufacturer and the aircraft was then grounded. Whilst the aircraft was grounded, the hydraulic reservoir pressure relief valves were tested and subsequently replaced. Since the replacement of the valves the aircraft has since operated fault free sectors.*

The operator was clearly conducting troubleshooting to try and locate the fault; however, this information is not always communicated back to a reporter as this would not be required as part of engineering processes. In this instance the reporter may have thought that despite continuously reporting the aircraft fault, that nothing was being done about it, however, clearly that was not the case. Operators receive reports in different ways, AML/Tech logs, emails, flight reports, safety reports etc. not all of them are acknowledged however, this does not mean that your report has not been received. Ultimately if a problem is still recurring then continue to report it.

All aircraft defects should be recorded in the cabin defects log/AML/tech log.

CAT.GEN.MPA.100 Crew responsibilities

(b) The crew member shall:

(1) report to the commander any fault, failure, malfunction or defect which the crew member believes may affect the airworthiness or safe operation of the aircraft including emergency systems, if not already reported by another crew member;

Without it being entered in the AML/tech log, engineering will not rectify the fault as there is no record to show that it has occurred. If there are any defects active in the AML/tech log on arrival at the aircraft and before departure, the operating Captain should notify the cabin crew of any defects that may affect them during flight. Once a defect has been recorded in the AML/tech log, it is then active until the time that it is rectified and cleared from the log by Engineering.

If an aircraft is permitted to continue operating with an active defect in the AML/tech log, there may be alternate operating procedures that have to be adopted during the flights before

rectification (depending on the defect), or other restrictions in place for example, how long the aircraft can fly with a particular defect. If at any point you are unsure whether a defect is permitted or you are unsure of the procedures to be adopted, you should speak with the flight crew, who can then explain why it is permitted.

We've taken the opportunity in this edition of FEEDBACK to review a topical report about mobile phone usage as more and more operators are using tablets and/or phones for passenger list, forms, reports, sales etc.

CREW USING MOBILE PHONES DURING TAXI - Cabin Crew FEEDBACK Edition 67

Report Text:

It seems that on most flights cabin crew are on their mobile phones at every opportune moment before the aircraft departs. On a few occasions, I've had to remind crew to turn their phones off whilst we are taxiing out to the runway, be it at base or when we are down route. I think it's totally unacceptable.

CHIRP 2021 Comment: *Take-off and landing are classed as critical phases of flight therefore cabin crew should not be using personal electronic devices during this time. There can be all sorts of personal circumstances that make it difficult to wait and whilst it is tempting to send a text message or make a quick call colleagues using their phones inappropriately should be reminded at the time to abide by the rules. During the critical phases of flight, cabin crew members should be focused and be ready to act should an emergency situation arise.*

If an operational task requires it, cabin crew can use an electronic device such as a phone or tablet during taxi in accordance with their company procedures. This could be to check passenger loads or to read PAs. The company Operations Manual will specify when the use of personal mobile phones or other electronic devices is permitted and this must be adhered to.



Comments on Previous FEEDBACKs - No Comments?

We have not received any comments regarding the previous edition of FEEDBACK. Here at CHIRP we very much value your inputs and comments, positive or negative; we recognise that we certainly don't have all the answers and want to ensure that we are giving you valuable content to support safety. Please do get in touch at mail@chirp.co.uk and let us know what you think about this edition, or anything else (that's safety related) regarding what's included.

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