



Editorial



Cpt. M. Chalk
ECA President

Aviation Safety - Are You With Us?

ECA is primarily a safety organisation; indeed we use the phrase

'Piloting Safety' on our letterhead and website masthead. The 'lion's share' of the work done on behalf of ECA is aimed at constantly improving the levels of aviation safety for the travelling public, those who live underneath flight paths and, of course, our own 38,000 members. ECA: 'Piloting Safety' is not just to imply that as pilots, we are the final guardians of safety in the aircraft; but also in our European political and regulatory system, we seek to drive the cause of safer aviation in all our work.

It was therefore with sadness and horror that we again hear of another helicopter accident and, of course our thoughts and love are with those affected, their families and friends. Two questions again spring to mind with respect to aircraft accidents:

- Do we care enough about those on board aircraft who don't pay for their own passage; the crew and contractors?
- Has the industry begun to lose its focus on the need to continually improve safety culture and performance?

The first question arises because even in Europe, the Helicopter and fixed wing 'non revenue flight' accident rates are significantly higher than revenue fixed wing flights. Is this because the lives of helicopter or oil rig or crop spraying or fire fighting crews are somehow worth less than an airline passenger? Or is it that on board these aircraft are people who have no alternative - they are employees whose only choice is to find other employment, rather than choose to fly with another airline next time? ECA believes the regulator must take a closer

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Can Runway Status Lights Help to Reduce Runway Incursions?

ECA representatives attended in late April a Workshop at Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG) on Runway Status Lights (RWSL). This is a new and fully automatic system designed to reduce the number and severity of runway incursions. It had been successfully on trial in the US since 2005 and improved the situational awareness of pilots and vehicle drivers. Aeroports de Paris have a plan to implement RWSL systems on CDG's two inner runways, to be operational by 2012. One objective of the workshop was to identify the hazards of using both the current ICAO standard Stop Bars and the RWSL systems. CDG currently has approximately 30 runway incursions a year with 3 - 5 in the high risk Categories A and B.

On behalf of ECA and IFALPA, Captain Rob van Eekeren presented some of the latent traps in airport design and highlighted potential human factors implications of using RWSLs in addition to current ICAO standard lights (stop bars, colour-coded runway centreline lights). IFALPA recognises the potential of the RWSL system, but demands intrinsically safe solutions (such as perimeter taxiways that avoid runway crossings) as a primary consideration.

ECA Technical Director Heinz Frühwirth cautions that introducing the RWSL system in Europe might cause confusion amongst pilots, who are used to Stop Bars (perpendicular to the taxi direction) switched by air traffic controllers when issuing a clearance to continue taxiing. The situation in Europe is also different, as there are few airports in the US authorised for Low Visibility Operations, while Cat III B is common at the major European hubs. IFALPA has therefore requested its HUPER Committee to study the implications of implementing Runway Status Lights.

Further information on the RWSL can be found under www.rwsl.net. For a copy of the ECA meeting report (for ECA members), please email fmf@eurocockpit.be ■

The problem



The proposal: part 1 (REL)



Runway Entrance Lights (RELs) illuminate red when a runway is unsafe to enter or cross due to a high-speed operation on the runway.

The proposal: part 2 (THL)



Takeoff Hold Lights (THLs) illuminate Red to indicate an unsafe condition when an aircraft is in position for takeoff and another aircraft or vehicle is on or about to be on the runway in front of it. To be consistent in appearance with Runway Entrance Lights, THLs are placed longitudinally along the runway centreline.

ECA Seeks a Technical Advisor

To further strengthen our Associations' presence in Brussels, ECA's General Assembly recently decided to enlarge ECA's Brussels office by a Senior Technical Policy Advisor. The new advisor will coordinate, support and advise ECA's advocacy efforts on technical aviation policy issues at EU level, represent ECA vis-à-vis EU Institutions, and support the Secretary General on administrative/organisational management tasks. The issue areas to be covered will include one or more of the following: air traffic management, aerodromes, air operations, flight crew licensing, accident analysis & prevention, aviation security. For further details see:

www.eurocockpit.be/career/tech

look at the relationship between accident rates and non ticket revenue flights, as at the moment these risks are too far out of line.

The second question arises from the reaction to an accident – rare as they are, even in the non-revenue world. Despite attempts to harmonise at the highest level, incident reporting and accident investigation; the reality is a very wide divergence in practice.

The fundamental building blocks of aviation safety improvement have, for decades, come from the flow of good information from incidents and accidents. The world's best experts cooperate to author ICAO Annex 13 – the globally accepted 'state of the art' of incident reporting and accident investigation. Unfortunately, the growing habit of 'politicising' accidents and then seeking to apportion blame results in resistance to the flow of information for fear of recriminations. ECA has repeatedly publicised the way human error is criminalised, and criminal investigation is prioritised over and muddled with safety investigation.

ECA calls on everyone who plans to be on an aircraft of any sort at any time in the future, to join with us in seeking a refocusing of the industry – and particularly the regulators – on the need to prioritise the improvement of the safety culture; above commercial imperative and certainly above any sort of recrimination for tragic accidents. To do otherwise is to gamble with the lives of those on board aircraft in the future ■

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Email: eca@eurocockpit.be
Website: http://www.eurocockpit.be
Tel. (32 2) 705 32 93

European Cockpit Association
Rue du Commerce 41
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
Fax. (32 2) 705 08 77



Next Meetings

- 4 May:** TNA Working Group, Brussels
- 5 May:** FTL Working Group, Brussels
- 6 May:** TLO Working Group, Brussels
- 11-15 May:** IFALPA Safety Seminar & AAP-1, Casablanca
- 18-19 May:** ECA Executive Board, Brussels
- 27-28 May:** ECA Long-Term Review Group, Amsterdam

The **European Cockpit Association** is the association of Flight Crew Unions from European States. Based in Brussels, ECA has 36 Member Associations, representing over **38.200** pilots from 36 countries. For more information: www.eurocockpit.be.

ECA and US ALPA to Defend the Spirit of Pilots' Unions

ECA and US ALPA met in April to strengthen their position on the EU-US negotiations towards a 2nd stage of the Open Skies Air Transport Agreement.

Both Associations agreed that without an appropriate response from the EU and US delegations on the social concerns generated by the implementation of the 1st stage EU-US agreement, there can be little support for a far reaching 2nd stage agreement. The typical BA-OpenSkies or UAL Air Lingus cases have shown the Pilots' community that their employers will not hesitate to locate subsidiaries in a different country to the one where their mainline is established, thereby attempting to stop Pilots' unions from exercising

full representation rights. ECA and US ALPA are demanding that a legal framework is set up that would re-balance industrial relations between employers and employees; and allow Pilots' Unions to be able to fully represent their members as effectively as in airlines which are nationally owned and controlled. Experience shows that good industrial relations contribute to a healthy structural development of the company at national, European and international level ■

From Keflavik to Brussels – When Does Europe Wake Up?

When the 188 passengers boarded the charter plane in Antalya (Turkey) to return to Iceland, on 27 Oct 2007, they did not know that their airplane would experience a serious safety incident – ending up beside the runway of Keflavik airport. Pilot fatigue and inadequate in-flight rest facilities were key factors contributing to this incident – which luckily left all on board unharmed – according to the recent Incident Report. The report makes several safety recommendations to the EU Institutions. Regrettably, these recommendations are likely to slip off the runway too, when attempting to land on Brussels' slippery political ground.

Published on 29 January 2009, the Icelandic Investigation report is outspoken on the role that pilot fatigue played in this incident. After having reported for duty at 09:05 in the morning of 27 Oct, the incident occurred at 01:55 the following day – at a time when the pilots' "body clock" was programmed for sleep and their natural performance levels were at their lowest. It occurred after a flight duty of 17:20 hours and the three pilots had probably "not experienced restorative sleep in over approximately 19 hours."

The report concludes: "it is very likely that the crew was fatigued and that the fatigue led to performance impairments" with a likely "direct impact on the landing and its outcome." The investigators' recommendations to the EU all focus on ways to prevent pilot fatigue.

The incident also sheds light on the issue of on-board rest facilities. Many airlines claim that economy seat areas are adequate for flight crews to sleep. The Keflavik incident shows this is wishful thinking – reconfirming earlier scientific findings on this subject. The report states that "restorative sleep is usually only obtainable in dark, quiet environments where skeletal muscles can fully relax. Any diversion from the optimal configuration (dark, quiet and horizontal) will decrease the probability that the crew will be able to experience restorative sleep [...]. The risk of fatigue and fatigue related errors would therefore remain present." For the Keflavik incident, the report concludes rest facilities "were less than optimal for sleep and decreased the likelihood that rest periods would help to reduce the risk of fatigue related errors."

To let the wider aviation industry benefit from the investigation's findings, the report makes concrete recommenda-

tions to the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). First, Europe should "modify the flight and duty time regulations to take into consideration factors shown by recent research, scientific evidence, and current industry experience to affect crew alertness." EASA should also "ensure operators have on-board rest facilities [...]" which "[...] ensure a dark and quiet (most silent area on-board aircraft) environment where the skeletal muscles can fully relax in a horizontal position." Finally, EASA is called upon to "develop guidance, based on empirical and scientific evidence, for operators to establish fatigue management systems [...]" as well as a methodology to continually assess the implementation of such systems.

Will EASA and the European Commission act upon these safety recommendations? Since late Sept. 2008, EASA has had a scientific study on its desk. Carried out by a group of renowned specialists, and based on a wide body of fatigue research, it demonstrates that today's EU rules are insufficient to protect against the risks of fatigue-induced incidents and accidents. The study makes recommendations on how to change these rules – including on some of the issues at stake in Keflavik.

7 months later – and after strong airline lobbying against this study – neither EASA nor the Commission have begun to address the study's findings. Undoubtedly, the 188 passengers of the Keflavik flight will be highly disappointed to learn about such inaction. Is it time to inform Europe's travelling public about this inaction? Or do we have to wait for Keflavik to become London Heathrow, Frankfurt Main, Madrid Barajas or Paris Charles de Gaulle airport? ■