

EASA Webinars

Unruly Passengers - Fly Right Campaign 2023



Monday 19th June 2023

Learning More About the Unruly Passenger Challenge

Wednesday 21st June 2023

Helping Passengers and Supporting Our Staff

General overview

In continuation to the campaign launched a few years ago by EASA "Zero tolerance against unruly passengers - Not on my flight" <https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/notonmyflight> it was noted that unruly passenger behaviour increased since the Covid-19 pandemic. EASA statistics show that there was a worrying increase in the severity of the occurrences.

This matches what police officers in different countries witnesses among the public, not just at the airports. So, as nowadays there are more angry individuals it has become a social problem which we must collectively manage throughout the industry, specifically as drugs and alcohol can be a risky mix when combined with flying.

Therefore, the areas on which one should work on are:

Collaboration - between the countries across borders, between stakeholders at national level, operational coordination between airports, handling agents, airlines etc. and the involvement of other key stakeholders when necessary.

Communication - balancing the stick and carrot while targeting specific audiences, clear messaging from airlines and airports to their

passengers and the communication of lived experiences.

Training and support - training for all the staff on reporting, de-escalation techniques, staff support from their organisation and operational support when situations arise.

Enforcement - effective enforcement regardless of the operator or nationality of the offender, MP14 (ICAO Montreal Protocol 2014) implementation and more cooperation between the enforcement organisations and the industry.

In relation to this, this summer EASA publicly launched a 'Fly Right' Campaign where it will provide a campaign briefing, management publication, airline safety article, and a marketing pack, which is available to all the relevant stakeholders.

Challenges to work on

The importance of a procedure that shall be in place for all the employees to be backed by their organisation throughout the whole process, including during the prosecution must also be tackled.

Nowadays we have moved to incidents happening due to the loss of experienced staff and personnel shortages, that lead to paying less attention to attend to unruly passengers.

Another contributing factor to disruptive behaviour is increased automation of processes at the airports (like check-in, security etc.) as such procedures often do not see the incidents probability but are focused to create a flow at the terminal.

Recently more prescribed medication and illegal drugs were sensed, and this indirectly resulted in a number of alcohol related unruly passenger behaviour events, as obviously drugs and alcohol do not compliment one another. Nevertheless, alcohol should be sold responsibly both at the airport and onboard and not just focusing on increasing sales.

Moreover, even though good communication is crucial to support both staff and crew to push prosecution, in certain incidents employees opt for a more passive approach. Hence, the demoralisation of airport and airline personnel should also be taken into consideration.

At times police do not show up or if they show up, they will not have the authority to prosecute. Therefore, this strengthens the arguments in favour of the MP14 implementation.

Occasionally, staff may feel reluctant to act in cases of unruly behavior as they feel fatigued and exhausted to perform when they are pushed to work to the maximum limit at a stretch, especially in cases of staff shortages.

It is accentuated how pressure on crew during turnarounds effectuates this, especially when airline crew must cooperate with authorities in case of an unruly passenger incident, which can result in a delay.

In case of cabin crew, it can be noted how disruptive passenger incidents might be taken lightly as it can be seen as a hindrance to increasing the personal sales onboard, especially when the spend per head target mechanism applies.

The challenges of ground personnel and how they wear different hats during their duty depending on the airline being handled at that instance shall be reviewed, to eliminate the difficulty to adapt to the different companies' disruptive passenger processes. This outlines the importance of the standardisation of unruly behaviour programmes.

Another concern is the staff/crew identification cards, as these can be easily noted by passengers. On certain occasions the employees were approached and bullied outside the place of work and/or virtually by the

unruly aggressor/s. Therefore, some push forward the idea to print the first name only, especially on name tags as a precautionary measure to keep one's personal details away from passengers' visibility to ensure the employees' safety.

Training and development

Good quality training is pivotal to ground staff (to understand and capture a behaviour before it goes on the aircraft), cabin crew (both at initial and recurrent level, basing the content on reported incidents) and pilots (to understand what goes on to support the cabin crew).

Another important factor is the effective continuous communication process before departure, ensuring that passengers are informed of any delays to avoid them from reaching the airport, and consequently minimising any unruly passenger events.

Moreover, it is suggested that methods of training should be shared among all stakeholders as this is all about supporting staff and not a commercial competition on which is the safest organisation.

Key messages

The main key messages of the campaign are:

Unite for success - Collaborate, communicate, and conquer.

Empower your staff - Equip your staff with the skills and training to handle difficult situations.

Stand by your staff - Support your frontline heroes with comprehensive training, including exceptional communication skills, whereas prioritising their wellbeing post event.

Help passengers to fly right - Prepare passengers for a smooth journey by sharing practical and relevant information before their flight. Rapidly communicate any delays and explicitly state zero tolerance for misbehavior, which can lead to early termination or prosecution.

Walk in their shoes - Continuously evaluate the passenger journey to ensure consistent messaging, exemplary staff behaviour, and reduce stressors that may trigger disruptive behaviour.

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Personnel Licensing Department**