



## From Training to Action: Cabin Crew Preparedness in Emergency Aircraft Evacuations

### Introduction

The pivotal and regulatory role of Cabin Crew Training Organisations (CCTOs) is to maintain aviation safety. The high level of safety standards in commercial aviation is strongly upheld by the competence and responsiveness of well-trained cabin crew. In emergency situations, cabin crew preparedness is fundamental. As front-line safety professionals, their ability to execute procedures swiftly and clearly, whilst showing authority directly influences the safety and survivability of passengers.<sup>2</sup>

This publication explores the regulatory frameworks that oversee the preparedness of cabin crew, the nature of training expectations, and the operational challenges. It features the importance of effective training, communication, leadership, and situational awareness which all contribute to a successful aircraft evacuation. This aligns with evolving requirements and best practices, which ensure that crew members are not only certified but truly ready to act when it matters most.

### Regulatory Framework: Ensuring Compliance

CCTOs must ensure full compliance with Regulation (EU) No. 1178/2011, which sets out the requirements for cabin crew training and certification under Part-CC. Besides, cabin crew employed by operators must meet the Safety and Emergency Procedure (SEP) training and recurrent qualification standards outlined in Regulation (EU) No. 965/2012, including the minimum crew complement depending on the type of aircraft and passenger capacity.

Additionally, aircraft certification must prove the ability to evacuate all the passengers and crew within 90 seconds using only 50% of the available exits, a scenario that is tested under controlled conditions throughout the approval process of the aircraft.<sup>2</sup> This regulatory expectation underlines the critical role of cabin crew preparedness and efficiency in real-life circumstances.

## Training and Competency Development: Focus on Performance

The responsibility of CCTOs goes beyond delivering a curriculum but also involves the development of operational competencies. Cabin crew training shall be outcome-based, to ensure cabin crew demonstrate assertive communication and leadership, respond to high-stress events with situational awareness, and execute emergency procedures with great precision.

Practical exercises, such as fire containment drills and mock evacuations, strengthen muscle memory and decision-making under pressure. This hands-on training significantly improves the crew members' flight safety outcomes and operational performance.<sup>1</sup> In such events the cabin crew training instructors shall assess the performance against predefined metrics, and not just record the attendance or participation.

Augmented Reality (AR) has shown potential to increase engagement and motivation in emergency procedures training.<sup>3</sup> Integrating emerging technologies with performance-based assessment can significantly elevate the realism and impact of training interventions.

## Operational Preparedness: Embedding Behavioural Preparedness

Cabin crew training programs shall ensure that cabin crew are well equipped to manage the human factors that are critical to emergency response. Training must seek to support the cabin crew authority onboard, improve their decision-making when performing under pressure, and improve their skills to recognise any potential hazards. Such training programmes must include role-play-based simulations with rotating leadership responsibilities, communication strategies tailored to interact effectively with impaired, disordered, or multilingual individuals, and behavioural training to help manage non-compliant and panicked passengers.

On the other hand, refresher training shall be conducted regularly to maintain familiarity with procedures and introduce any updated risk situations. Besides, internal audits that evaluate procedural compliance and instructional effectiveness must also be well documented.

This has a measurable impact on key cabin crew competencies such as communication, emergency handling, and decision-making. These competencies are crucial for effective passenger management and crew coordination during high stress evacuations.<sup>1</sup> Combined

with the strategic positioning of cabin crew throughout the aircraft; these competencies enhance their ability to manage passenger movement effectively and facilitate evacuation during emergencies.

## Addressing Real-World Complexity: Going Beyond the Drill

Evacuation simulations alone, while essential, are not enough to prepare cabin crew for the full scale of real-world variables. Evidence shows that passenger behaviour, mainly delays caused by retrieving luggage, is a major evacuation risk.<sup>4</sup> This must be addressed during training by incorporating realistic scenarios which involve passenger interference, cross-cultural communication elements, and disruptive behaviour management techniques. Moreover, AR tools enable cabin crew trainers to create more realistic and dynamic emergency scenarios, by incorporating environmental challenges and passenger behaviours, which more traditional drills often fail to fully replicate.<sup>3</sup>

The cabin crew should also be trained to use assertive, standard verbal callouts and commands supported by visual cues. Furthermore, training must prepare crew members to recognise and react effectively to any environmental disruptions, such as excessive noise, smoke, darkness, and spatial disorientation.

## Conclusion

Cabin crew preparedness begins with guidance. Training bears the responsibility of not only instilling theoretical knowledge but also for developing operational competence. The realism, quality, and consistency of training directly impact the effectiveness of cabin crew response in actual emergencies.

Therefore, CCTOs are expected to comply with EASA's regulatory framework and competency requirements, review and improve instructional methods, and promote a safety culture through realistic, scenario-driven learning techniques.

If such responsibilities are fulfilled, it is ensured that cabin crew are not only equipped with procedures they must follow, but are fully capable to respond, lead and save lives in critical situations.

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## References

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<sup>2</sup> European Union Aviation Safety Agency. (n.d.). *Aircraft emergency evacuation*. EASA. <https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/light/topics/aircraft-emergency-evacuation>

<sup>3</sup> Gangabissoon, R., Bekaroo, G., & Moedeen, W. (2020). *Application of augmented reality in aviation: Improving engagement of cabin crew during emergency procedures training* [Conference paper]. ACM International Conference Proceeding Series. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3415088.3415120>

<sup>4</sup> Royal Aeronautical Society. (2019). *Gone in 90 seconds?* Retrieved from <https://www.aerosociety.com/news/gone-in-90-seconds/>