

Everything Matters: Almost Isn't Good Enough

The NTSB's decision to remove transportation worker fatigue from its list of 10 Most Wanted Transportation Safety Improvements is premature—and even misleading if even one person believes that the safety threat from pilot fatigue is now a thing of the past (see “Preflight,” page 9).

While the modern science-based pilot fatigue rules released a year ago this month serve as a powerful tool to advance safety in the U.S. airline industry, they don't apply to every airline pilot. Until all-cargo pilots are also guaranteed the opportunity for adequate rest, this serious safety threat is far from solved.



From the day that the FAA released rules that did not apply to pilots who fly cargo, ALPA's volunteers and staff

launched an aggressive, multitiered strategy to develop legislation to bring all airline pilots under the new regulations. We worked with Congress to introduce the Safe Skies Act of 2012, which would direct the Department of Transportation to apply the flight- and duty-time regulations and minimum rest requirements to all-cargo operations. Introduced in both the Senate and the House, the safety bill garnered strong bipartisan backing. Our effort to build additional support continues, and we are reaching out on Capitol Hill as you read this.

ALPA's commitment to advancing the safety and security of all-cargo operations doesn't stop with fatigue. In the wake of 9/11, we called for a risk-based approach to air cargo security. As part of that approach, ALPA played a critical role in developing a standardized crisis response plan for the aviation industry and government agencies to use to respond to criminal and terrorist acts aboard aircraft. The result was the 2006 release of a new All-Cargo Common Strategy, which marked the first time that the security plan included all-cargo flightcrew members.

In addition, ALPA worked to expand the Federal Air Marshal program and the Crewmember Self-Defense Training program the agency manages. The training serves as a critical security resource and is available to every all-cargo pilot. Our union was also instrumental in helping to create the Federal Flight Deck Officer program and lobbied successfully to enact federal legislation that makes all-cargo pilots eligible to participate.

In more action to achieve One Level of Safety and Security in all types of flight operations, ALPA has strongly pressed for installing reinforced flight deck doors on both passenger and all-cargo airliners. We have not yet realized our goal of system-wide equipage in cargo operations, but many cargo aircraft operating today are equipped with these doors.

Similarly, ALPA was fully engaged in the government's work to develop standards for secondary barriers for flight decks.

These standards were released in September 2012. Recent decisions by some airlines not to install them, however, only underscore the work we have to do. We need to bring airlines on board in recognizing the profound security benefits that these wire or mesh devices offer when placed on the cabin side of the fortified cockpit door of an aircraft.

Since 2004, we have also sought full regulation of lithium battery shipments, including requirements to enhance marking, labeling, and packaging requirements; to conduct employee training; and to notify the pilot-in-command that batteries are aboard the aircraft. In February 2012, the Dangerous Goods Panel of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) recommended

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that certain dangerous-goods standards be applied to lithium batteries—a significant victory. While the ICAO standards take effect on Jan. 1, 2013, U.S. regulators have not yet taken action, and ALPA is working hard to harmonize these standards.

These are major milestones in our union's countless efforts to make all-cargo flight operations ever safer and more secure. Yet, we have challenges ahead. For example, ALPA is calling for those who have unescorted access to air cargo shipments and all-cargo aircraft to satisfy a fingerprint-based criminal history records check. We are also seeking security identification display area protection for all-cargo air operations areas as well as mandatory training for pilots in the All-Cargo Common Strategy that ALPA helped develop.

Economic challenges also lie ahead as all-cargo airlines work to compete in the global marketplace. Capt. Scott Stratton (FedEx Express), his pilot group's Master Executive Council chairman, describes in this issue the advantage that many foreign airlines gain from their governments' pro-aviation policies and how North American governments need to do the same to ensure that our airlines can compete and prevail (see “Emirates' Growing Hold on Air Cargo,” page 28).

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