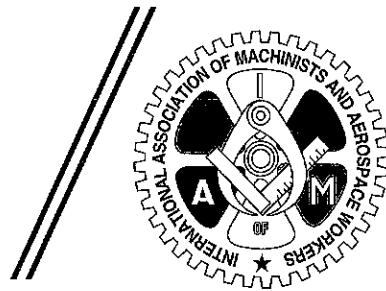


**International
Association of
Machinists and
Aerospace Workers**



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OFFICE OF THE GENERAL VICE PRESIDENT

GL-2 Legal

January 22, 2013

Via Internet Submission at <http://www.regulations.gov>

FAA Administrator Michael Huerta
Docket Operations, M-30
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Room W-12-140
West Building Ground Floor
Washington, DC 20590-0001

Subj.: Docket No. FAA-2012-0953

Dear Administrator Huerta:

The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers ("IAM") strongly supports the Federal Aviation Administration Policy Statement on Occupational Safety and Health Standards for Aircraft Cabin Crewmembers, and welcomes this opportunity to submit comments. The IAM represents thousands of Flight Attendants across the United States, as well as tens of thousands of additional airline employees who work for many carriers, including most of the major airlines.

For many years the IAM has been concerned about the occupational safety of Flight Attendants and has advocated for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to play a role in regulating safety standards for flight crewmembers. This new involvement of OSHA in aircraft cabin crewmember safety is long overdue. In the past, safety has focused on aviation safety and airworthiness. As a result, occupational safety measures for Flight Attendants that are not related to aircraft airworthiness were often overlooked, unregulated, and/or not satisfactorily addressed.

There are many examples of hazards to Flight Attendant health and safety that are currently under regulated. OSHA regulation of these hazards could reduce or eliminate the dangers. For example, Flight Attendants are put at risk when they collect trash from passengers without any protective gloves. Flight Attendants have not been required to wear protective gloves, and some airlines have prohibited Flight Attendants from wearing gloves if they so wish. This is particularly egregious in this day and age of so many airborne illnesses. The SARS epidemic was widely held to have been spread by air travel. To force Flight Attendants to collect trash from passengers who may be contagious without protecting themselves is inexcusable. We

do not expect first responders, or even school janitors, to come in touch with bodily fluids without adequate protections. Why is it any different for Flight Attendants? Protecting Flight Attendants from contracting contagious airborne diseases could help curb the spread of those diseases throughout the nation.

Other hazards of great concern which should be regulated include, among others, hazards related to lifting and moving luggage, exposure to extremes of heat and cold as a result of cabin temperature, and the hazards related to opening and closing aircraft doors. Cabin air quality is also an essential issue to Flight Attendant occupational health as Flight Attendants have no choice but to breathe recirculated, pressurized air while at work. In addition, more extensive sanitation standards could be applied to enhance the working conditions of Flight Attendants without compromising aviation safety. These are just a few of the many hidden hazards to Flight Attendants which, to date, have not been adequately addressed.

Perhaps the most glaring example of Flight Attendant injuries from a hazard unrelated to aircraft airworthiness is airplane coffee makers. In-Flight coffee makers and water heaters have been exploding, injuring Flight Attendants, and inflicting first, second and third degree burns on their faces, necks and hands for at least twenty years. While the Federal Aviation Administration ("FAA") issued directives in this area approximately twenty years ago, those directives failed to fully resolve the problem.¹ In 2009 there was an uptick in reports to the IAM of Flight Attendant injuries due to exploding coffeemakers. The IAM advocated for safety measures, and the carrier launched an investigation into the incidents. Still, no new regulatory action was taken, and again, in the last few weeks the issue of exploding coffee makers on airlines has resurfaced. On January 3, 2013 the FAA issued a safety alert regarding "bursting" coffee makers which continue to cause serious Flight Attendant injuries.² OSHA, which undoubtedly encounters coffee makers and water heaters in other workplace settings, should also be involved in regulating airplane coffeemakers and ensuring that true safety measures are put into place to protect Flight Attendants from suffering severe burns while flying 35,000 feet in the air.

The Policy Statement focuses on three areas in which the FAA has not promulgated any standards including: hazard communication, blood borne pathogens, and hearing conservation for employees inside the aircraft. We applaud the departments for identifying these areas, allowing OSHA standards to apply, and expect this will greatly improve Flight Attendant occupational safety and health. However, OSHA involvement in aircraft cabin crewmember safety should not be limited to only these three areas. The Policy Statement also asserts that "FAA and OSHA will establish procedures to identify any additional working conditions where OSHA requirements may apply." The IAM encourages the FAA and OSHA to move forward on establishing these procedures swiftly as there are many other areas, such as the ones mentioned in these comments, in which OSHA standards may improve aircraft cabin crewmember safety.

¹ In 1993 and 1994 the FAA issued Airworthiness Directives to have malfunctioning coffee makers and water heaters inspected, and if necessary repaired See Airworthiness Directives 93-NM-181-AD and 94 NM-01-AD.

² See Safety Alert for Operators SAFO 13001 dated 1/3/13 and available at: http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/safo/all_safo/media/2013/SAFO13001.pdf

In addition, we commend the FAA for clarifying in the Policy Statement that some OSHA requirements that are not safety and health standards and do not address working conditions apply to airline flight crewmembers. Specifically the FAA clarifies that OSHA's regulations on record keeping, employee exposure and medical records, and the critically important anti-discrimination provisions all apply to flight crewmembers. To the extent not already clarified, we urge the FAA to further ensure that there are or will be whistleblower protections for Flight Attendants who report health and safety issues. Finally, we commend the FAA for clarifying that it expects OSHA to investigate complaints and referrals, and that such investigations are not likely to interfere with inspections of aircraft in operation.

Ultimately, the IAM enthusiastically supports OSHA standards applying to Flight Attendants and encourages the FAA and OSHA to expand application of OSHA standards to Flight Attendants as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sito Pantoja".

Sito Pantoja

GENERAL VICE PRESIDENT

SP/pt