

IAL3308

Cabin Crew Management



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Unit 1 IAL3308 Cabin Crew Management

Introduction to Cabin Crew Management

Cabin Crew

Flight attendants or cabin crew (also known as stewards/stewardesses, air hosts/hostesses) are members of an aircrew employed by airlines primarily to ensure the safety and comfort of passengers aboard commercial flights on select business jet aircraft, and on some military aircraft.

History

The role of a flight attendant derives from that of similar positions on passenger ships or passenger trains, but it has more direct involvement with passengers because of the confined quarters and often longer travel times on aircraft. Additionally, the job of a flight attendant revolves around safety to a much greater extent than those of similar staff on other forms of transportation. Flight attendants on board a flight collectively form a *cabin crew*, as distinguished from pilots and engineers in the cockpit.

Heinrich Kubis was Germany's (and the world's) first flight attendant, in 1912.

Origins of the word "steward" in transportation are reflected in the term "chief steward" as used in maritime transport terminology. The term purser and chief steward are often used interchangeably describing personnel with similar duties among seafaring occupations. This lingual derivation results from the international British maritime tradition (i.e. chief mate) dating back to the 14th century and the civilian United States Merchant Marine on which US aviation is somewhat modeled. Due to international conventions and agreements, in which all ships' personnel who sail internationally are similarly documented by their respective countries, the U.S. Merchant Marine assigns such duties to the chief steward in the overall rank and command structure of which pursers are not positionally represented or rostered.

Imperial Airways of the United Kingdom had "cabin boys" or "stewards"; in the 1920s. In the USA, Stout Airways was the first to employ

stewards in 1926, working on Ford Trimotor planes between Detroit and Grand Rapid, Michigan. Western Airlines (1928) and Pan American World Airways (Pan Am) (1929) were the first US carriers to employ stewards to serve food. Ten-passenger Fokker aircraft used in the Caribbean had stewards in the era of gambling trips to Havana, Cuba from Key West, Florida. Lead flight attendants would in many instances also perform the role of purser, steward, or chief steward in modern aviation terminology.

The first female flight attendant was a 25-year-old registered nurse named Ellen Church. Hired by United Airlines in 1930, she also first envisioned nurses on aircraft. Other airlines followed suit, hiring nurses to serve as flight attendants, then called "stewardesses" or "air hostesses", on most of their flights. In the United States, the job was one of only a few in the 1930s to permit women, which, coupled with The Great Depression, led to large numbers of applicants for the few positions available. Two thousand women applied for just 43 positions offered by Transcontinental and Western Airlines in December 1935.

Female flight attendants rapidly replaced male ones, and by 1936, they had all but taken over the role. They were selected not only for their knowledge but also for their characteristics. A 1936 *New York Times* article described the requirements: "The girls who qualify for hostesses must be petite; weight 100 to 118 pounds; height 5 feet to 5 feet 4 inches; age 20 to 26 years. Add to that the rigid physical examination each must undergo four times every year, and you are assured of the bloom that goes with perfect health."

Three decades later, a 1966 *New York Times* classified ad for stewardesses at Eastern Airlines listed these requirements: "A high school graduate, single (widows and divorcees with no children considered), 20 years of age (girls 19 1/2 may apply for future consideration). 5'2" but no more than 5'9," weight 105 to 135 in proportion to height and have at least 20/40 vision without glasses."

In the United States, they were required to be unmarried and were fired if they decided to wed. The requirement to be a registered nurse on an American airline was relaxed as more women were hired, and it disappeared almost entirely during World War II as many nurses enlisted in the armed forces.

Overview

The primary role of a flight attendant is to ensure passenger safety. In addition to this, flight attendants are often tasked with customer service duties such as serving meals and drinks, as a secondary responsibility.

The numbers of flight attendants required on flights are mandated by international safety regulations. For planes with up to 19 passenger seats, no flight attendant is needed. For larger planes, one flight attendant per 50 passenger seats is needed.

The majority of flight attendants for most airlines are female, though a substantial number of males have entered the industry since the 1970s.

Responsibilities

Prior to each flight, flight attendants attend a safety briefing with the pilots and lead flight attendant. During this briefing they go over safety and emergency checklists, the locations and amounts of emergency equipment and other features specific to that aircraft type. Boarding particulars are verified, such as special needs passengers, small children traveling as unaccompanied or VIPs. Weather conditions are discussed including anticipated turbulence. Prior to each flight a safety check is conducted to ensure all equipment such as life-vests, torches (flashlights) and firefighting equipment are on board, in the right quantity, and in proper condition. Any unserviceable or missing items must be reported and rectified prior to takeoff. They must monitor the cabin for any unusual smells or situations. They assist with the loading of carry-on baggage, checking for weight, size and dangerous goods. They make sure those sitting in emergency exit rows are willing and able to assist in an evacuation and move those who are not willing or able out of the row into another seat. They then must do a safety demonstration or monitor passengers as they watch a safety video. They then must "secure the cabin" ensuring tray tables are stowed, seats are in their upright positions, armrests down and carry-on stowed correctly and seat belts are fastened prior to takeoff. All the service between boarding and take-off is called *Pre Take off Service*.

Once up in the air, flight attendants will usually serve drinks and/or food to passengers. When not performing customer service duties, flight attendants must periodically conduct cabin checks and listen for any unusual noises or situations. Checks must also be done on the lavatory to ensure the smoke detector hasn't been deactivated and to restock supplies

as needed. Regular cockpit checks must be done to ensure the pilot's health and safety. They must also respond to call lights dealing with special requests. During turbulence, flight attendants must ensure the cabin is secure. Prior to landing all loose items, trays and rubbish must be collected and secured along with service and galley equipment. All hot liquids must be disposed of. A final cabin check must then be completed prior to landing. It is vital that flight attendants remain aware as the majority of emergencies occur during takeoff and landing. Upon landing, flight attendants must remain stationed at exits and monitor the airplane and cabin as passengers disembark the plane. They also assist any special needs passengers and small children off the airplane and escort children, while following the proper paperwork and ID process to escort them to the designated person picking them up.

Flight attendants are trained to deal with a wide variety of emergencies, and are trained in First Aid. More frequent situations may include a bleeding nose, illness, small injuries, intoxicated passengers, aggressive and anxiety stricken passengers. Emergency training includes rejected takeoffs, emergency landings, cardiac and in-flight medical situations, smoke in the cabin, fires, depressurization, on-board births and deaths, dangerous goods and spills in the cabin, emergency evacuations, hijackings, water landings, and sea, jungle, arctic, and desert survival skills.

Training

Flight attendants are normally trained in the hub or headquarters city of an airline over a period that may run from four weeks to six months, depending on the country and airline. The main focus of training is safety. Safety training includes, but is not limited to: emergency passenger evacuation management, use of evacuation slides/life rafts, in-flight firefighting, and survival in the jungle, sea, desert, ice, first aid, CPR, defibrillation, ditching/emergency landing procedures, decompression emergencies, Crew Resource Management and security.

In the United States the Federal Aviation Administration requires flight attendants on aircraft with 20 or more seats to hold a *Certificate of Demonstrated Proficiency*. This is not considered to be the equivalent of an airman certificate (license), although it is issued on the same card stock. It shows that a level of required training has been met. It is not limited to the airline at which the attendant is employed (although some initial documents showed where the holder was working), and is the attendant's personal

property. It does have two ratings, called Group I and II. Either or both of these may be earned depending upon the type of aircraft (propeller or turbofan) on which the holder has trained.

Work Environment

Because airlines operate around the clock, flight attendants work evenings, weekends, and holidays. Attendants may be away from home two to three nights per week. Most have variable schedules.

Cabin Crew Lifestyle

A cabin crew's lifestyle is different from most, as the demands of the profession are different from most other job. Maintaining good health can be a challenge for a member of the cabin crew if you don't think about planning for it in advance. By leading **a healthy lifestyle** on the daily basis, you can ensure that your health is at its best while performing the duties of your job. In order to build good daily health routines, you should be aware of the benefits of **nutrition and exercise**.

Adapting to Lifestyle Changes

The nature of the cabin crew profession, with its scheduled hours and destinations, requires considerable adaptation on the part of cabin crew. These changes can have direct effect on your current lifestyle. The changes include schedule, personal life, relocation, and loneliness.

- **Schedule**

The airlines operate around the clock and the cabin crew have to work in shifts that involve irregular hours, working weekends and public holidays, and spending time away from home. The hours in a flight attendant's working day are irregular and are determined by the flight assignment. If the flight leaves at 5 A.M., the flight attendant is expected to report to the captain by 4 A.M. The maximum number of flying hours per day is also set by union agreement, and on-duty time is usually limited to 12 hours per day, with a daily maximum of 14 hours.

- **Personal Life**

The month-to-month schedule is never guaranteed for not to be changed, the cabin crew must be able to adjust their personal life accordingly. They may be flying weekends one month and the next month they might have a different series of days off. They may be gone for a day, or up to 6 to 8 days, or longer. Being away from home for what might be an

unknown periods of time can be the stressful job that they have to deal with.

- **Relocation**

Another reality the cabin crew may face is the relocation to a base or domicile which is not presently your home. The decisions for relocation can impact the family. For example, will the cabin crew move their spouse and children or commute from the city where they live to the city where they are relocated? If they are single, are they comfortable uprooting themselves from where they are now? Even if this is something they can handle, their family and friends may not be supportive.

- **Loneliness**

Consider that even if you have been relocated, you may have little control over being home to attend events, functions and holidays as you have in the past. In fact, you may spend a holiday with people you have never met before or be on a layover in a country that does not recognize a holiday that you celebrate. All of these changes can create feeling of loneliness.

Flight non-attendants

Nervous flyers may have to ask several times for that reassuring brandy. Jet lag, David Adam discovers, can affect the memory of the cabin crew. David Adam

Years of jet lag stalls the short-term memory of flight attendants, new research suggests. Constant travel across time zones floods their bodies with stress hormones, which may make them absentminded and less attentive.

Air hostesses (the research studied only women) who criss-cross time zones every week have slower reactions and poorer memories than their colleagues on airport check-in desks, according to Kwangwook Cho of Durham University, UK, and colleagues. Sufficient rest between long flights is the only way to prevent this, they explain in the *Journal of Neuroscience*¹.

Time zones change from east to west. Lunchtime in London is breakfast at Tiffany's, New York. This throws the body clock of people flying east or west into turmoil. Passengers feel tired for days after the flight but are still woken in the middle of the night by the hormonal cascade that signifies 'morning'. Jet lag can also upset people's stomachs, delay ovulation and disturb menstrual cycles. Flights from north to south, in contrast, stay in the same time zone and do not cause jet lag.

For business travellers and tourists jet lag is a nuisance but its effects quickly wear off. More serious problems begin when an individual's internal clock has no time to reset itself between long journeys.

The problem is the stress hormone 'cortisol'. When we get cold, run for the bus or even fall in love, our bodies secrete cortisol, a chemical messenger that is also part of the body's daily routine. High cortisol levels in the morning help us through the day, but the supply drains away as the body anticipates a quiet night (except for those in love).

Chronic jet lag jams open the body's cortisol tap, Cho's team finds. The body cannot tell whether it is night or day and produces the hormone just in case. Cabin crew who cross more than eight time zones have one-third more cortisol in their saliva than ground staff. Flight attendants serving on shorter flights have lower levels.

Research indicates that cortisol can influence the structure of nerve cells. Long-term exposure to high levels may affect some brain functions, including memory.

Tests show that air hostesses with more than four years service have slower reactions and poorer memories than average. Cabin crews and ground staff were shown sequences of pictures, either 5 or 25 seconds apart, and asked whether the images matched. Flight attendants took between a fifth and half a second longer to respond, and made up to 9% more mistakes.

Cabin crew who work on domestic flights for two weeks, between long-haul treks across the world, are not affected. But the air hostesses surveyed by Cho's team are not so lucky. They all cross different time zones at least once a week. Some only have a two-day break between flights.

Several airlines cooperated with the study but they are sensitive about the issue and wish to remain anonymous, says Cho, a psychologist. He is surprised at how much damage long-term jet lag seems to cause and is currently trying to find out whether the effects are permanent.

Paul Moore, spokesman for Virgin Atlantic, says that the Civil Aviation Authority and the Federal Aviation Authority regulate cabin crew schedules. "We are not aware of any ill-effects," he adds.

• References

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