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## Aviation Regulatory Lapses Significantly Reducing Safety Levels

Despite all the promises and promotional videos, the European Union's regulation of the aviation industry has now hit an all time low placing passengers at an unacceptable level of risk. With 2009 rapidly becoming one of the worst accident periods for many years including the recent tragic events resulting in loss of life, any weaknesses within the European Aviation Authorities and the EU only serve to promote unsafe practices.

As a result, documented evidence confirms that commercially operated aircraft are, on a daily basis, flying with defects that have not been properly assessed. The consequence is to deliberately pass on the increased risk factor to the unwitting fare paying passenger. AEI believes however that a passenger purchasing an airline ticket does so in the belief that airline's take their safety responsibilities seriously.

With maintenance budgets coming second only to fuel, airlines are becoming ever more desperate to cut costs. This often involves deviation from maintenance regulations when away from a maintenance base often by placing flight crews under pressure to perform maintenance actions themselves although completely unqualified to do so.

Aircraft, of course, can be permitted to fly with certain defects, but only after following strict procedures which includes proper defect diagnosis by a qualified engineer prior to consulting the manufacturers dispatch deviation guide, the so called Minimum Equipment List (MEL).

This is endorsed by aircraft manufacturer's recommendations relating to the use of the MEL such as:

***The aim of the MEL is not to encourage aircraft operation with inoperative equipment, because it is not desirable for an aircraft to be dispatched in these conditions, and such a situation is permitted only as a result of careful analysis. The MEL should, therefore, be consulted on the ground, and only when a failure has been identified and confirmed.***

AEI believes the flying public should be both protected from and made aware of such maintenance malpractices. Safety can only be guaranteed as long as airlines strictly comply with airworthiness requirements which include the proper diagnosis of defects by qualified engineers before any flight continues.

Commercial considerations must not be allowed, under any circumstances, to take precedent over flight safety issues. AEI cannot condone airlines using passenger safety as a hollow marketing slogan whilst undermining safety in areas normally hidden from passengers. Passenger safety must be paramount as aircraft are replaceable, human life is not.

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