



## **PRESS RELEASE Sept. 12Th. 2008**

### **Passenger safety under threat - Aviation Authorities failing to do their job!**

"Airline passengers are unwittingly facing higher levels of risks due to the increasing amount of aircraft system faults being reported when commercially convenient for the operator to repair, rather than when they actually occur" according to Fred Bruggeman, AEI General Secretary. "The situation is a cause of great concern because pilots are not immune to commercial pressures. With constant cost cutting by the airlines, often in order to remain commercially viable, many pilots feel the need to report defects only on homebound flights or flights into airports where engineers are available. As result, safety may be compromised to an unacceptable and at times dangerous level".

It should therefore come as no surprise that this worrying issue will be top of the Agenda when maintenance experts from around the world meet next week (18th-21st September) in Malmö, Sweden for the 36<sup>th</sup> Aircraft Engineers International Annual Congress.

Airlines and national regulators were extremely quick to deny and at times ridicule the results of an AEI survey into the situation, which highlighted that up to 85% of defects are reported on homebound flights or into a maintenance base. AEI though further challenged the industry to perform its own survey but to date not one single airline or authority has responded positively. "Aircraft engineers throughout Europe are confronted with this troubling neglect of safety regulations on a daily basis and as a result, passengers are being exposed to greater risk" said Mr Bruggeman.

With a leading pilots' union recently stating that "Pilots are under pressure", AEI believes it can no longer be ignored. When pressed on whether the log book claims affect safety, the pilots union stated that "We have not reached that point yet, but who knows whether it will be a different story in a year's time." AEI's continuous call for closer co-operation with pilot organizations' has to date been met with silence. AEI once again calls for closer co-operation with pilots on this issue before it's too late.

Perhaps of even greater concern was the response from the various European regulating authorities on learning of the survey's findings. All authorities, without exception, were very reluctant to take action, some even claimed "that they have complete faith in their own system of auditing", whilst others simply did not respond. The situation also highlights loopholes raised by AEI in the current auditing system, which tends to involve Inspectors checking procedures etc. in the hangar offices but rarely involves unannounced inspections where the action actually takes place; outside on the ramp where the errors occur.

Furthermore, occurrence reports written by engineers highlighting these safety issues are often just filed away and eventually lost in the system but seldom lead to any corrective action. So despite numerous reports and the readily available data regarding these failures, AEI has witnessed very little activity from the European National Authorities to recognise and correct these serious safety lapses. Too many National Authorities appear to want to avoid confronting the issue in order to ensure their cosy "relationship" with the airlines is not disturbed, often citing lack of resources as an excuse for non-action.

AEI are however 100% committed to ensuring that passengers are protected at all times by insisting that safety standards are maintained at the highest possible levels. Therefore AEI will continue to offer its full support to EASA in achieving its own mission of "promoting the highest common standards of safety".

Further topics to be discussed at the congress are problems with the process of Standardising European Aviation Regulations, Globalisation and how best to confront the overwhelming commercial bias that is continually witnessed during the safety rulemaking process. As for every congress there is also an open invitation to the Regulators throughout Europe to come and discuss the issues and potential solutions.

### **SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT**

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