



Operational Notice Number:004/2020

## IATA Operational Notice

### **Managing Crew Fatigue During a Crisis**

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| <b>Applicable to:</b>  | <b>All Operators</b>   |
| <b>Effective Date:</b> | <b>16 October 2020</b>   |
| <b>Expiry Date:</b>    | <b>31 December 2021</b>  |
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#### Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the airline business and resulted in a crisis for the entire aviation industry. Airlines around the world have cancelled flights, suspended operations temporarily and/or are continuing with limited resources. As such, fatigue is not a risk that immediately comes to mind, with crews working reduced hours and extended periods of time off between operational duties.

However, airlines may find during COVID-19 and in the restart to full operations, there are fatigue risks arising from previously unidentified areas.

This Operations Notice highlights the importance of managing fatigue during the current operational environment, and the many challenges we are facing in terms of fatigue management during, and as a result of, this unprecedented COVID-19 crisis.

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*This Notice should be used for information only and is based on data available at the time of issuance. It is not intended to replace an operator's own assessment and evaluation, nor replace the opinions and expert advice that the operator may receive from third parties. Operators shall remain responsible at all times for their operations and any decisions related to this notice.*



## Description

There are many challenges we are facing in terms of fatigue management during, and as a result of, the COVID-19 crisis. This includes a shift in where our fatigue hazards may be coming from, how we can effectively identify these hazards and recognize changing safety behaviors. As a result, the effective and flexible monitoring and management of fatigue carry significant importance at this time.

New areas of potential fatigue risks may include:

- Extended duty-times and use of heavy crew to avoid lay-overs due to testing / quarantine requirements
- Use of 1st class and Business class seats as rest facilities
- Unfamiliar operations, such as new airports for repatriation flights, or new gate locations for cargo vs. passenger facilities
- Reduction in staffing levels having the potential for remaining staff to be working longer, more intense or condensed hours
- COVID-19 influencing many aspects of personal life, affecting crews general physical and mental fitness

Some non-roster related fatigue considerations airlines may need to assess with a restart to full operations could include:

- Changes to home living circumstances, such as home schooling of children, loss of income across households and displacement from previous housing
- Changes in crews' physical and mental fitness caused by COVID stressors, (such as changing financial status of households), concerns over health of themselves or family members, uncertainty over employment stability, and reduced social activities (such as support structures and fitness facilities)



Additionally, during COVID-19 operations, airlines and crews have identified shifts in attitudes and perceptions around safety and subsequent safety behaviors. When faced with competing priorities around personal and operational considerations it is not unusual for individuals to downplay or reduce attention on hazards that, in an uncertain and complex environment, seem to be less of an immediate threat.

Airlines and crews may find that their perception of fatigue hazards become under-appreciated as a result of less roster related fatigue factors being in play. Unfortunately, regardless of the cause of fatigue impairment, the safety implications are still present. With reduced staffing levels, faced by many airlines, the layers of defences in place to minimize hazards resulting in unsafe outcomes is likely to be reduced. Considering fatigue impairment of individuals within an operating environment with reduced layers of defence, this becomes more critical as it is more likely that we are relying on final layers of defence within operations of front-line crews identifying a hazard and acting accordingly.

Changing safety behaviors to be aware of may include:

- Reduced safety and fatigue reporting by crews
- Increased likelihood of crews not identifying when impaired by fatigue
- A higher acceptance of reduced safety margins within operations
- Rushing or reduced time allocated for safety checks and procedures



## Recommendations and Mitigating Actions

With the operational challenges and the resulting changes in fatigue risks and safety behaviors, IATA urges all operators to consider the use and effectiveness of their fatigue management strategies within this new environment, and highlight this issue, via special briefing material or another effective form of communication, to all concerned operational personnel.

Suggested actions include:

- Increase or change training/education on Fatigue and Fatigue Management, to assist crews in managing additional stressors impacting sleep health and alertness
- Identify potential new fatigue data sources to mitigate possible reductions in safety and fatigue reporting
- Increase management commitment and communications to crews around the recognition and support of fatigue management, with the recognition that operations within COVID-19 create unique fatigue hazards that need to be identified and reported by crews for the effective mitigation of them by the organization.
- Consult the IATA ['Guidance for managing crew fatigue during a crisis'](#) providing more detailed information and recommendations, as well as a Q&A section resulting from the 2 series webinars conducted in collaboration with ICAO, to assist operators in identifying fatigue risks and managing them effectively