Was it the crewmember
or was it the system that failed?

By Donald Wecklein, One Cabin Safety
My background – 27 years in aviation

- 1991: Started as a flight attendant
- 1998 – 2000: Air Transportation Supervisor/Instructor
- 2000 – 2004: Saudi Aramco Aviation, Supervisor/Manager & hazmat program mgr./instructor to pilots and flight attendants
- 2004: Attended FlightSafety International; became a certificated aircraft dispatcher
- 2004 – 2006: Director of Inflight for corporate 121 airline, teaching certification, taught FA training, SEP, hazmat program, security to pilots, FAs, ground crew, tech publications, carry-on baggage, etc.
- 2006: Cabin Safety Inspector for the FAA: Cabin Safety Subject Index
  - I do not represent the FAA at this event. I present as a cabin safety expert
- 2014: Started One Cabin Safety
He almost blew it

Distracted disarming the door.
  • Luckily, slide didn't inflate into jetway

Met with management
  • Problem discussed
  • Given suspension without pay
  • System remained the same
What is the system?

The system goes all the way back to the formation of the airline

- The “system” is the system of manuals
  - Explains how it conducts operations.
- They are revised through regulatory requirement
  - In the United States, this is required by 14 CFR 121.133 (a) Each certificate holder shall prepare and keep current a manual for the use and guidance of flight, ground operations, and management personnel in conducting its operations.
Most common errors

Cabin secure for pushback/landing

• All carry-on bags properly stowed
• All overhead bins closed
Main door closing

“Prior to closing the main cabin door, all carry-on baggage must be stowed and secured, overhead bins closed, and galley secured.”

A fairly common phrase in manuals.

- How long?
- Is cabin secure well defined?
- Are there exceptions?
Cabin secure violation

How can it easily happen?

• During a manual safety demonstration
When the crewmember errs

When a safety related incident occurs:
  • Error made, report written
  • Discuss issue
  • Possible discipline

The crewmember’s actions are addressed, but what about the underlying problem?
  • Did the system have anything to do with it?
My vacation

This could happen with any airline; July 2017

Flight within Asia

• Both directions experienced same issue: bags not properly stowed.
• Return sector, service items not collected.
After vacation

Sent a letter to a contact in the airline

• Provided overview of the flight
• Complimentary as applicable
• Described observations
• Provided possible contributors to the problem

The carry-on baggage program itself has deficiencies:
• Carry-on baggage isn’t taught long enough or thoroughly enough during initial/recurrent training.
• Crewmembers are not well trained and tested in enforcing the carry-on baggage policies.
• Cabin operations is lacking controls to ensure all carry-on baggage is stowed prior to pushback.
• Cabin crew don’t understand the importance of having carry-on bags stowed for takeoff and landing.
• Cabin crew don’t bother to enforce the carry-on baggage policies when unsupervised.
• When receiving a checkride, cabin secure regarding carry-on baggage isn’t enforced or checked.

The safety demonstration video is well done; with the exception of one sentence “Inflate the life vest before exiting the aircraft.”

were to experience a ditching if passengers followed the video instructions, some passengers would likely not survive what could be a survivable ditching. Actual previous accident data reference: Ethiopian Airlines flight 861 November 23, 1990:
http://www.nist.gov/srd/nist81300064.htm

Many passengers died because they inflated their life vest inside the cabin, causing them to be trapped inside by the rising water. Safety demonstrations are supposed to state that you should not inflate your life vest inside the aircraft, in case of the unlikely event the aircraft is forced to land in water.

I was surprised to see solid cabin curtains separating the economy form business class seating. I would have anticipated seeing semi-transparent curtains with holes in them as found on many other airlines. This could be a potential security concern.

Overall, I have strong praise for the cabin crew on both flights. All crewmembers were pleasant and interacted very politely and professionally with all passengers. The announcements were clear and understandable. The service was done efficiently yet not rushed, and done with a smile! The crew coordinated well together and clearly work together as a team. Their overall appearance (hair, uniform, posture, communication) was perfect. Overall you have a very nice operation and I hope to fly again someday on when I return.

While this report captures the details of what occurred during those two flights, you or anyone from are welcome to contact me regarding my observations.

Kind regards,
via email
Donald Wecklein
Check the system

**Overall synopsis**
While overall most procedures appear to be followed and the cabin and flight crew coordinate well with regard to turbulence, there are a few items for evaluation in the training department.

- Without reviewing cabin crew manuals and training program to make a thorough assessment of the root cause, it appears to me that this problem is due to one or multiple possibilities:
  - The carry-on baggage program itself has deficiencies.
  - Carry-on baggage isn’t taught long enough or thoroughly enough during initial/recurrent training.
  - Crewmembers are not well trained and tested in enforcing the carry-on baggage policies.
  - Cabin operations is lacking controls to ensure all carry-on baggage is stowed prior to pushback.
  - Cabin crew don’t understand the importance of having carry-on bags stowed for takeoff and landing.
  - Cabin crew don’t bother to enforce the carry-on baggage policies when unsupervised.
  - When receiving a checkride, cabin secure regarding carry-on baggage isn’t enforced or checked.
Crew compensation

Sometimes system design contains errors

Crewmembers may take independent actions to compensate

- The crew compensated for system error by correcting the safety demo information
What’s going to happen?

We know what it’s trying to say
Look at what it says, not what you think it says.

• Words used in the manual has potential to completely change the meaning of the sentence or the outcome.
In a men’s gym locker room

Is there anything wrong with this sign, or does it look acceptable?

WE ARE

NOT RESPONSIBLE

FOR YOUR LOST OR

STOLEN ARTICLES
Clarification

When working, the manual is their guide, with no one from inflight management to ask for clarification.

Procedures and policies should be designed with no room interpretation.

It’s critical that the system flight attendants work within is properly designed and clear.
Solutions

• Review your manual for what it says, not what you *think* it says

• Walk yourself through procedures. There should be coordination or handoffs all the way through, sometimes across manuals.
  • If the process doesn’t have clear flow, the procedure needs further revision

• After office review is done, consider using line flight attendants for further evaluation.

• When problems occur, whether crewmember errors or misunderstandings, look *internally* to ensure the topic is properly covered. *The system may have been a contributing factor.*
Thank you