



ECA
Piloting Safety

Summer Fatigue Alert

Pilots' guide to safe operations – in a summer full of delays

Summer is here and with it – delays, cancellations and further fatigue from overstretched ultra-busy summer rosters. Some airlines have taken precautionary measures, trying to reduce delays by adding 'buffers', incl. additional aircraft & crew on standby and longer turnaround times. But many airline managers remain keen to schedule as many flights as possible, and as tightly as possible. Hence, we, as pilots, may at any time find ourselves in the position of delay-managers. At ECA we have put together some brief guidance to consider.

Delays, as we are all unfortunately aware, are part of busy summer operations. We know that as a profession we make every effort to bring our passengers to their destination, on time, and – above all – safely.

However, in trying to do this it is important that pilots are not the ones who become the 'buffer', by making up for delays or cancelled flights. As a safety professional it is clearly essential to keep a cool head, especially when decision making may be subject to direct or implicit commercial pressure. It goes without saying that safety must always come first.

Fatigue

Busy summer rosters and delays may lead to fatigue: during the workday, or piling up over days or weeks. Remember that being rested and fully alert is key for safe operations. Therefore:

- If you cannot get enough sleep and/or feel unfit to fly, call in unfit and get rested. This is a legal obligation.
- if you get fatigued during the day, preventing you from safely performing your duty, call in fatigued and step down from duty before the next flight. This is also a legal obligation.
- if in doubt about the maximum flight times allowed under EU law, download the ECA [Flight Time Limitations calculator](#).
- if fatigued – report it! This is your obligation by law. Use your airline's reporting form and procedure; if not available, use the ECA [reporting template here](#).
- if your airline's management exerts pressure on you or your colleagues to fly while fatigued, or threatens disciplinary measures, contact your national union, and have it reported to your national authority and ECA. If needed, ECA will alert EASA.

Commander's Discretion

The law allows the Commander to increase or reduce daily flight and rest times. For example, to exceed the maximum flight time limit of 13 hours by up to 2 hours, in the case of unforeseen circumstances during the day, providing all crew members have been consulted and are fit to fly.

Using Commanders Discretion is a complex decision and must be guided by safety considerations. Under no circumstances should you be pressured into using Discretion. As the name implies it is at the Commander's discretion alone to use. If however it is *planned* or expected by *others* and *before* being offered by the Commander, it may well be a sign that it is being pushed or used inappropriately within the operation. It is not a tool to make up for an airline's unrealistic planning, rostering and overly short turn-around times. It must only be used in case of *unforeseen* circumstances which occur *after* reporting time.

Before your next flight, take a look at the rules [here](#) – as explained by pilots for pilots. Reading them now may help you tomorrow.