

CALLBACK

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Unruly Passengers – Déjà Vu

The April 2000 (#250) issue of CALLBACK featured an article on the adverse effects of passenger misconduct on flight crews. Included was an ASRS report about a drunken passenger carried on board an airliner in a wheelchair by the airline's passenger assistance staff. The Captain involved in this incident commented:

■ *Someone needs to counsel these people that while their job may be to assist passengers, it is not to assist drunk passengers on the airplanes. I feel that if a guy is too drunk to walk on the airplane, then he is too drunk to ride for 2-1/2 hours on the same full airplane.*

Unfortunately, that report wasn't an isolated incident. ASRS recently received a report submitted by a Flight Attendant describing an almost identical event:

■ *I was walking through the cabin checking carry-on bags when the involved passenger asked me where his bags were. I had a difficult time understanding him because he was slurring his words... He became confrontational. I then went to the First Class galley and asked the #1 [Flight Attendant] if he knew what was going on. He didn't, but the greeting Flight Attendant did. He said he [the passenger] was too drunk to walk, so he was boarded with a wheelchair. I questioned why we were taking a passenger who was obviously intoxicated and was told by ground personnel not to worry about it, they gave*

him coffee and he'd be fine. I didn't like that answer so I voiced my concerns to the Captain and the passenger was removed.

The crew's response in this situation was "right on." FAR 121.575(c) states, "No certificate holder may allow any person to board any of its aircraft if that person appears to be intoxicated." A 1998 ASRS study on passenger misconduct incidents concluded that passengers should be monitored for intoxication and erratic behavior prior to boarding, and denied boarding if their behavior appears likely to pose a safety hazard during flight.

Another recent incident reported to ASRS by an air carrier Captain involved an altitude deviation related to a passenger disturbance:

■ *During descent my First Officer was tending to a belligerent passenger. I was flying and executing clearances single pilot. At 10,700 feet Center instructed me to level at 11,000 feet. I complied.... It was unclear to me whether we were cleared to 11,000 feet or 10,000 feet. I debriefed Center and they said everything was OK.*

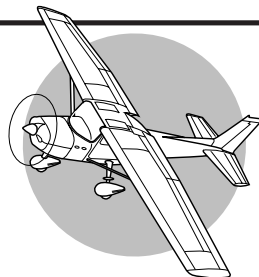
Flight crews involved in similar situations may want to consider notifying ATC of the single-pilot cockpit operation while internal flight problems are being resolved. ▲

"A Tight 360"

Single-pilot operations can also challenge General Aviation pilots, particularly when the flight occurs at night in Instrument Meteorological Conditions, and the pilot is experiencing subtle physical incapacitation. A GA pilot described an episode of spatial disorientation that occurred while attempting to respond to an ATC instruction.

■ *[During] ILS approach at night in IMC, allowed the aircraft to reach a 60-degree bank before recovery in attempt to comply with ATC request for a "tight 360." Did not complete 360° turn. After recovery from unusual attitude, rejoined localizer to airport, switched to local advisory service...without properly canceling IFR clearance after entering VFR conditions.*

The pilot listed contributing factors in the continuation to his report:



• *Pilot was fatigued after 6 hours of flight and attack of shingles.*

• *Pilot should have refused ATC request for a "tight 360." (I question the wisdom of 360° turns at night during an ILS approach at any time.)*

• *Recovery was delayed by not being on critical instruments while attempting to get Flight Director to make the 360 and not lose positional awareness relative to ILS course.*

• *Recent experience not adequate for 360's at night in IMC.*

The reporter had flown only a few hours in the last 90 days before the incident occurred. In hindsight, a safer response would have been to inform ATC, "unable 360." ▲

ASRS Recently Issued Alerts On...

Bleed duct clamp failure on a EMB-145LR
Signage and marking at a South American airport
Failures of GE CT7-9B2 tailpipe temperature sensors
B767-300 inflight smoke caused by a standby AC inverter
Maintenance-related B717 thrust reverser incident inflight

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Air Carrier / Air Taxi Pilots	2503
General Aviation Pilots	582
Controllers	85
Cabin/Mechanics/Military/Other	191
TOTAL	3361

Insect Asides



Insect infestations and their associated safety hazards are not limited to smaller aircraft parked outdoors. They can also pose a problem for commercial passenger and cargo jets. An MD-80 Captain's report offers a contemporary version of the ant-and-grasshopper story:

■ *Arrived at aircraft [and] was informed by ramp personnel that there was cargo in the forward belly that was infested with ants. Examined [the cargo hold] myself and found the floor and walls of the cargo area crawling with ants and concentrated around a shipment of live crickets. Entered in aircraft logbook. Maintenance came out and some spraying was done and appeared to kill all visible [ants] though there were still some present. Maintenance sign-off was for set-up of future fumigation. Asked maintenance supervisor if he could assure me that the infestation was such that ants would not get into the aircraft wiring and cause a problem enroute. He could not, and I refused the aircraft. There were too many unknowns.*

The effect of insects on equipment is not an idle concern, as demonstrated by another aircrew's "buggy" experience. The First Officer reported to ASRS:

■ *On initial takeoff roll the Captain had trouble setting the power using the EPR gauges. I assisted and we got the EPR setting to stabilize on the bug settings. I then noticed the N1 rotor speeds all read about 85% – normal takeoff power readings are 95%. I brought this to the Captain's attention and he aborted the takeoff. Our speed had topped out at 75 knots during our initial roll. We returned to the ramp and wrote up the anomalous engine readings. The next day our mechanics told us they had removed a large amount of insects and related material from the tubes and lines associated with the probes that provide the pressure readings for the EPR gauges. We also found out at that point that the airplane had sat several days without engine covers or plugs. I believe this whole incident could have been avoided if procedures regarding long-term aircraft parking had been followed.*



A Smoke Alarm Sounds on Short Final...

A DC-9 Captain reports an aircraft emergency that was handled well by the cabin and flight crew but has training implications.

■ *After landing (Runway 21R), enroute to the gate, the aft Flight Attendant (F/A) reported "...aft right lavatory smoke detector is going off" to the lead F/A. The lead F/A relayed the message to the Captain and moved aft to investigate. The aft lavatory door was opened to check for smoke and/or fire. None was found. This was reported to the Captain. The F/A's continued to investigate. They opened the under-sink cabinet. Noting a suspicious "amber glow" under the sink, with the smoke alarm still "on," they discharged one halon fire extinguisher into the area below the sink. They also removed the trash bin and determined that the entire area was cold and there was no smell of smoke.*

Meanwhile, the Captain declared an emergency and continued to monitor the situation and taxied to the gate. The co-pilot coordinated all of the communications with ATC and Ramp Control. Upon arrival at the gate, normal deplaning occurred (with the smoke alarm still on) and the Fire Department personnel entered the aircraft through the aft airstairs.

The aft F/A recalled that the smoke alarm actually started to "buzz" on short final... She had not been trained to know what the alarm sounded like and ...[there was] very high noise level in the area. It was not until after clearing the runway, with the engines at idle, that she could clearly hear and identify the smoke alarm tone.

The F/As have not been trained in how to unlatch the (hidden) mechanism holding the under-sink cabinet door. The F/As [also] are not aware of the presence of the "amber light" under the lavatory sink, associated with the water heater!

The Captain obtained the information on Flight Attendant training during a post-event debriefing of all crew members. He submitted an extensive report of the incident to his company, including Flight Attendant training and air carrier flight safety personnel.

Air carrier and corporate pilots routinely undergo alarm recognition and related emergency systems training. A similar training regimen for this company's cabin crew might have prevented confusion during the emergency. ▲