Air Carrier Training Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ACT ARC)

ACT ARC Recommendation 22-01
Crew Member Communications with Respect to De-escalation

I.   Submission

The recommendation below was submitted by the De-escalation Training Enhancement Workgroup (DTE WG) for consideration by the Air Carrier Training Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ACT ARC) Steering Committee at its November 17, 2021, meeting. The ACT ARC Steering Committee adopted this recommendation, and it is submitted to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as ACT ARC Recommendation 22-01.

II.   Statement of the Issue

Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR), Part 121 requires each certificate holder to have approved initial and recurrent training programs that ensure each crewmember is adequately trained to perform his or her assigned duties.

III.   Background

To support certificate holders' compliance with 14 CFR Part 121 regulations, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has published guidance on developing, implementing, reinforcing, and assessing training for flight attendants. Detailed lists and summaries of most of the applicable regulations and available guidance for flight attendant training are provided by the FAA Flight Standards Information Management System (FSIMS). Detailed information for training relevant to managing onboard misconduct is provided by the FAA Safety Assurance System (SAS) Part 121 Flight Attendant Passenger Handling Element Design Data Collection Tool ED 5.2.4 121A OP Passenger Handling, and the FAA Element Performance Inspection Data Collection Tool 4.2.4, Training of Flight Attendants, Element Summary Information. This latter tool specifically collects the following training center inspector check data that are related directly or indirectly to a flight attendant's handling of abnormal passenger behavior:

> 1.1.15. … emergency training which includes instruction on the handling of illness, injury, or other abnormal situations involving passengers or crewmembers to include familiarization with the emergency medical kit, in accordance with the Certificate Holder's design. *Sources: 121.135(b)(15); 121.417(a); 121.417(b)(3)(iv)*

> 1.1.16. … instruction on the handling of hijacking and other unusual situations, in accordance with the Certificate Holder's design. *Sources: 121.135(b)(15); 121.417(a); 121.417(b)(3)(v)*

> 1.1.18. … initial ground general subject training of passenger handling in accordance with the Certificate Holder's design. *Sources: 121.415(a)(2); 121.421(a)(1)(ii)*

> 1.1.19 … initial ground general subject training approved crew resource management initial training, in accordance with the Certificate Holder's design. *Sources: 121.404; 121.415(a)(2); 121.421(a)(1)(iii)*

2.14. … instruction in passenger handling policies and regulations relating to flight attendant activities, in accordance with the Certificate Holder's design. *Sources: FAA Order 8900.1 Chap 23, Vol 3, Sec 3, Para 3-1769B3*

2.26. … joint pilot and flight attendant CRM and evacuation training in accordance with the Certificate Holder's design. *Sources: FAA Order 8900.1 Vol 3, Chap 23, Sec 4, Para 3-1792B1*

2.47. … training on passenger abuse of flight attendant in accordance with the Certificate Holder's design. *Sources: FAA Order 8900.1, Chap 23, Vol 3, Sec 4, Para 3-1798B8*

2.48. … training on passengers who appear to be under the influence of intoxicating substances, in accordance with the Certificate Holder's design. *Sources: FAA Order 8900.1, Chap 23, Vol 3, Sec 4, Para 3-1798B8*

2.49. … training on passengers who may jeopardize aircraft or passenger safety in accordance with the Certificate Holder's design. *Sources: FAA Order 8900.1, Chap 23, Vol 3, Sec 4, Para 3-1798B8*

2.58. … aircraft ground training that includes instruction on the crewmember general passenger handling responsibilities, in accordance with the Certificate Holder's design. *Sources: FAA Order 8900.1, Vol 3, Chap 23, Sec 5, Para 3-1828C*

2.60. … aircraft ground training that includes instruction on the crewmember passenger handling responsibilities for smoking and no smoking requirements, in accordance with the Certificate Holder's design. *Sources: FAA Order 8900.1, Vol 3, Chap 23, Sec 5, Para 3-1828C*

2.62. … procedures to handle passenger disturbances involving alcoholic beverages, passenger noncompliance with FAR's, and situations that may result in interference with crewmembers, in accordance with the certificate holder's design. *Sources: FAA Order 8900.1, Chap. 23, Vol 3, Sec 6, Para 3-3546*

2.69. … training in regulatory smoking prohibitions, signage and passenger briefings, and procedures to follow when passengers do not comply with smoking regulations, in accordance with the certificate holder's design. *Sources: FAA Order 8900.1, Chap 23, Vol 3, Sec 6, Para 3-1851D1*

Taken together, the above documents, in combination with various regulations, policies, and guidance materials developed by the FAA; Departments of Transportation (DOT), Justice (DOJ), and Homeland Security (DHS); and Transportation Security Administration (TSA) identify many of the passenger behaviors that have the potential to adversely affect aviation safety and security. While certificate holders must train crewmembers to recognize, evaluate, and manage these behaviors, the existing guidance is inconsistent and fails to identify many current, specific types of passenger misconduct. In most cases the available guidance lacks recommendations for training employees to de-escalate, effectively manage, and appropriately report incidents. While many certificate holders develop these detailed training elements on their own, a proactive collaboration between regulators and industry would improve the consistency in reporting and effectiveness of the procedures, lead to widespread adoption of best practices, and ultimately enhance aviation safety and security.

For these reasons, the DTE WG was formed to recommend the development of and/or updates and improvements to de-escalation training guidance. Specifically, the Steering Committee tasked the DTE WG to study and address the specific topic of de-escalation techniques and the current methodologies used to deliver de-escalation training to flight attendants, as noted in the Workgroup Terms of Reference.

Although the FAA notes the need for procedures to manage unruly or disruptive behavior in the aircraft cabin, current industry and FAA guidance does not address many recent abnormal or disruptive behaviors, such as onboard use of personal electronic devices to record incidents, refusal to wear masks, etc. The proposed recommendations suggest methodologies that can be used to deliver de-escalation training based on the specific training objectives and are products of the DTE WG's in-depth review of current certificate holder training methodologies.

Spielfogel and McMillen define de-escalation as a "verbal or nonverbal communication strategy that can help a person regain a sense of calm and self-control." They go on to note that two "common elements of de-escalation are (1) the attempt to reduce the use of heightened, disproportionate, or harsh responses to perceived conflict, and (2) the attempt to reduce heightened negative emotions present in the situation."

The ACT ARC agrees that airline de-escalation training should develop the ability of each employee to utilize, with appropriate competence, effective verbal/nonverbal communication strategies when confronted with situations that involve perceived conflicts or negative emotions that could jeopardize the safety or security of flight or the health or safety of other employees or the traveling public.

The ACT ARC further agrees that there is no "one size fits all" solution for de-escalation training, which must be tailored to the individual air carrier's operation. Guidance on de-escalation training should incorporate industry best practices to provide as much information as possible for an air carrier developing such training. Each air carrier meets de-escalation training requirements by incorporating those requirements in its approved programs under 14 CFR part 121, subparts N and O; 14 CFR part 121 subpart Y (Advanced Qualification Program (AQP)); 49 U.S.C. §44918 Crew training; 49 U.S.C. §44734 Training of flight attendants; or its Employee Assault Prevention and Response Plan (EAPRP), which is required by Section 551 of Public Law 115-254 (FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018).

The ACT ARC also agrees that AC 120-65, *Interference with Crewmembers in the Performance of their Duties*, contains useful terms and definitions related to de-escalating incidents. As noted in its purpose statement, this AC "provides information … which may be used to manage and reduce the instances of passenger interference with crewmembers." The current threat environment goes beyond terrorist actions to include other forms of interference in the cabin, and some terms and definitions from this AC have become relevant again. A copy of AC 120-65, published in October 1996 and canceled following the creation of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and a shift from managing hijackings to counter-terrorism after 9/11, is included with this report as Appendix A.

The ACT ARC further encourages incorporating elements of de-escalation training, as appropriate, into Crew Resource Management (CRM) training. As described in AC 120-51E, CRM provides one way of "optimizing the human/machine interface and accompanying interpersonal activities. These activities include team building and maintenance, information transfer, problem solving, decision-making, maintaining situational awareness, and dealing with automated systems. CRM training is comprised of three components: initial indoctrination/awareness, recurrent practice and feedback, and continual reinforcement." It should also be noted that AC 120-65, which as discussed above has been canceled, is referenced in AC 120-51E:

> l. Training for crewmembers in appropriate responses when passengers intimidate, abuse, or interfere with crewmember performance of safety duties. Training should address crew coordination and actions, which might defuse the situation.
> **See AC 120-65, Interference with Crewmembers in the Performance of their Duties, dated October 18, 1996.** Training should include specific communication topics, such as conflict resolution, with particular attention to the most serious passenger interference, attempted hijack. (*Emphasis added, excerpted from AC 120-51E, p. 2 of Appendix 3*)

IV.   Recommendation

> **Recommendation 22-01:** *To enhance crewmember communications when de-escalating misconduct in the cabin, the ACT ARC recommends the FAA develop guidance to operators that incorporates Crewmember Resource Management (CRM) concepts in de-escalation training programs.*

FAA guidance materials for development of de-escalation training modules should discuss how operators can best incorporate CRM concepts. Sub-recommendation ACT ARC 21–14(c) requests that the FAA encourage carriers to develop and use real world, scenario-based training in the prevention or de-escalation of heightened situations. Effective communications between crewmembers, both within the cabin and between the cabin and flight deck, are essential to maintaining flight safety and should be integrated into scenario-based de-escalation training. Crew Resource Management (CRM) training is one well-established method to enhance crewmember communications. The development, implementation, reinforcement, and assessment of CRM are discussed in AC 120-51E. As explained in this AC, "CRM refers to the effective use of all available resources: human resources, hardware, and information."
AC 120-51E notes also that various groups routinely work with the flight deck crew and are "essential participants in an effective CRM process." In addition to flight attendants, these groups include dispatchers, maintenance personnel, and air traffic controllers.

AC 120-51E describes a CRM framework that can directly support the development of crewmember de-escalation training programs; this framework consists of six essential concepts:

(1) CRM training is most effective within a training program centered on clear, comprehensive SOPs [Standard Operating Procedures].

(2) CRM training should focus on the functioning of crewmembers as teams, not as a collection of technically competent individuals.

(3) CRM training should instruct crewmembers how to behave in ways that foster crew effectiveness.

(4) CRM training should provide opportunities for crewmembers to practice the skills necessary to be effective team leaders and team members.

(5) CRM training exercises should include all crewmembers functioning in the same roles (e.g., captain, first officer, and/or flight engineer, flight attendants) that they normally perform in flight.

(6) CRM training should include effective team behaviors during normal, routine operations.

AC 120-51E notes that effective CRM "can be blended into all forms of aircrew training," "concentrates on crewmembers' attitudes and behaviors and their impact on safety," "requires the active participation of all crewmembers," and "provides an opportunity for individuals and crews to examine their own behavior." The AC also suggests certain training concepts that would appear to be well-suited to enhancing crew de-escalation skills, including role-playing exercises, and attitude/personality measures to assess individual strengths and weaknesses. Initial implementation of CRM training requires a firm understanding of the airline's management and line employee familiarity with the relevant concepts, commitment from all affected managers to the importance of comprehensive SOPs and clear, open communications without negative repercussions, and monitoring of training delivery to collect systematic feedback.

V. References

- Spielfogel, J.E. and McMillen, J.C. *Current use of de-escalation strategies: Similarities and differences in de-escalation across professions*. Social Work in Mental Health, 2017, 15:3, 232–248. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332985.2016.1212774