InFO

Information for Operators

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An InFO contains valuable safety information for operators that should help them meet certain administrative, regulatory, or operational requirements. The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

Subject: Flight Attendant (F/A) Communication Techniques and Onboard Procedures to De-escalate Cabin Misconduct.

Purpose: This InFO provides resources for Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) parts 91, 121, 125, and 135 operators' consideration when developing or reviewing their communication techniques and onboard procedures to assist F/As to resolve cooperatively incidents of misconduct by using de-escalation techniques to alleviate threats to aviation safety.

Background: The Air Carrier Training Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ACT ARC) formed the De-escalation Training Enhancement Work Group (DTE WG) to recommend the development of, or updates and improvements to, de-escalation training guidance for F/As. In November 2021, the ACT ARC accepted Recommendations 21-12, 21-13, and 21-14, which were then submitted to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

ACT ARC Recommendation 21-14 specifically includes a best practices guide for de-escalating cabin misconduct, which is based on the DTE WG's literature review and assembly of best practices from law enforcement, healthcare, and air carriers.

Discussion: ACT ARC Recommendation 21-14 included Spielfogel and McMillen's definition for de-escalation[1], which is a "verbal or nonverbal communication strategy that can help a person regain a sense of calm and self-control." They 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 acknowledges that certificate holders are required to train crewmembers to recognize, evaluate, and manage passenger behavior that could adversely affect safety and notes that existing guidance could be enhanced by including current, specific types of passenger misconduct.

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[1] 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.

The ACT ARC encourages proactive collaboration between regulators and industry to improve the consistency in reporting and effectiveness of the procedures, lead to widespread adoption of best practices, and ultimately enhance aviation safety and security. The ACT ARC explains that F/A training for de-escalation should be tailored to the individual air carrier's operation but incorporate industry best practices. For this reason, it included a de-escalation best practices guide in ACT ARC Recommendation 21-14, Appendix B.

The full text of the recommendations can be viewed on the ACT ARC website at https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/avs/offices/afx/afs/afs200/afs280/act_arc/act_arc_reco/.

Recommended Action: Directors of Operations, Program Managers, and Directors of Training should consider the information and de-escalation resources provided by the ACT ARC when developing or reviewing their communication techniques and onboard procedures programs for F/As. Additionally, F/As should be familiar with the de-escalation best practices guide contained in ACT ARC Recommendation 21-14, Appendix B.

Contact: Questions or comments regarding this InFO should be directed to the Air Transportation Division at (202) 267-8166.