



ASSEMBLY — 38TH SESSION

TECHNICAL COMMISSION

Agenda Item 31: Aviation Safety — Emerging Issues

CHILD RESTRAINT

(Presented by the International Transport Workers' Federation)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the goals of aviation safety is that all reasonable steps be taken to ensure safe air travel for the flying public and crewmembers. Cabin crew are responsible for the safety, health and security of all occupants in the cabin of commercial airplanes. While fairness dictates that all passengers be afforded the same level of protection, in many countries the youngest and most vulnerable may be allowed to travel on the lap of an adult for taxi, take-off, landing, and during periods of turbulence, if they are under a certain age. In order to ensure that these youngest passengers remain secured during critical phases of flight and turbulence, the exception to international aviation regulations that allows children to travel in the laps of adults must be eliminated.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) ensure safe air travel through development of recommendations and guidance related to the development of regulations that achieve one level of safety for all passengers and items on-board the airplane;
- b) achieve one level of safety for the youngest travellers by eliminating regulations that permit occupants under the age of two from being carried on the lap of an adult; and
- c) develop clear, consistent guidance to States and parents on the proper use and identification of safe and appropriate devices for restraint of children related to their size and weight.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to the Safety Strategic Objective.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Not Applicable.
<i>References:</i>	American Academy of Paediatrics; <i>Policy Statement: Restraint Use on Aircraft</i> ; Paediatrics, 108(5): 1218-1222; 2001; http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;108/5/1218 ; Accessed 6 September 2013 Mohan D. Schneider LW; <i>An evaluation of adult clasping strength for restraining lap-held infants</i> ; Hum Factors 21:635–645; 1979; http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/ijlink?linkType=ABST&journalCode=sphfs&resid=21/6/635 ; Accessed 6 September 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On the aircraft, cabin crew are required to secure all items in the cabin, galley and lavatories, from carry-on bags to coffee pots, to comply with aviation regulations intended to ensure safety in an emergency, when loose items can become missiles. In fact, an unsecured or inadequately secured lap child can become one of those “loose items” who may not only suffer serious or fatal injury, but may also injure others, and impede emergency evacuation. Moreover, without proper restraint, a lap child may not survive the dynamic forces and actions of a survivable crash.

1.2 Of no less concern are injuries that can be sustained due to inflight turbulence. Lap children often play or walk up and down busy and congested aisles. Young children are also often seen standing on parents’ knees or leaning on shoulders and are susceptible to any bounce or lunge of the plane. Turbulence is a leading cause of injury in non-fatal accidents, and has even resulted in three documented deaths of lap children, according to the American Academy of Paediatrics.¹ To manage this threat, turbulence should be avoided if possible; however, technology has not yet provided a suitable on board detection and warning device to alert flight crews of all impending encounters.

1.3 In addition to improving safety by ensuring that all passengers, regardless of age or size, be properly restrained, a clear, consistent approach utilizing appropriate restraints would help parents or guardians traveling with children to understand and comply with the myriad of international regulations governing child restraints, and is especially critical given the relatively recent phenomenon of international code share agreements. Development of consistent, uniform child restraint device standards and airline policies by ICAO would provide States with the direction needed to ensure an orderly global implementation.

1.4 Allowing children to be held on parents’ laps or remain otherwise improperly restrained will perpetuate, among some otherwise safety-conscious parents, the false perception that such practices are safe because they are permitted by aviation regulators. Unfortunately, this perception persists despite decades-old research confirming that it is nearly impossible for a parent to physically restrain a lap child during severe turbulence or a survivable crash.²

2. CONCLUSION

2.1 One level of safety should be afforded to all passengers and items on-board the airplane. To achieve one level of safety for our smallest travellers, regulations must not allow an irrational exception that creates two levels of safety; one for adults and the other for passengers under a certain age. The rational solution to this glaring bias is a regulation that requires all passengers be properly secured by means of an age-appropriate restraint device.

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¹ American Academy of Paediatrics; *Policy Statement: Restraint Use on Aircraft*; Paediatrics, 108(5): 1218-1222; 2001

² Mohan D. Schneider LW; *An evaluation of adult clasping strength for restraining lap-held infants*; Hum Factors 21:635–645; 1979