



Cooperative Arrangement for the Prevention of Spread of Communicable Disease through Air travel (CAPSCA)

Workshop / Seminar on Aviation Business Continuity Planning

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 25 – 26 May 2010

Report

The Workshop / Seminar on Aviation Business Continuity Planning was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 25 – 26 May 2010 following a recommendation of the CAPSCA-Asia Pacific Regional Aviation Medicine Team Meeting (RAMT) during its third meeting 3-4 September 2009:

«Business Continuity Planning during a pandemic that results in high absenteeism rates was regarded as an important aspect of preparedness planning and one which the RAMT felt deserved further emphasis. It recommended that further work be undertaken in this area.»

This recommendation is in line with the Strategic Objective E of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO):

Continuity — Maintain the continuity of aviation operations.

Identify and manage threats to the continuity of air navigation through the following measures:

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- 2. Respond quickly and positively to mitigate the effect of natural or human events that may disrupt air navigation.*

The Workshop / Seminar on Aviation Business Continuity Planning was actively supported by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) and hosted by DCA Malaysia. Additionally, a substantial number of State Representatives and industry stakeholders from Airlines, Airports and Air Navigation Service Providers made presentations and actively participated in the discussions.

I. An Introduction to Business Continuity Planning

A general introduction to the relationship of pandemic impacts, multi-sector involvement and multi-sector preparedness planning was provided by UN-OCHA: The presentation emphasized a globalized society, interrelated and dependant on each other. This brings major advantages for the peoples, for the industry, commerce and all kind of services. On the other hand major vulnerabilities and risks come with the close interaction of societies, systems and infrastructures.

There are multiple scenarios which could cause a potential impact for operations of business, such as natural disasters (e.g. tsunamis, earthquakes), severe weather (e.g. typhoons, thunderstorms), major accidents, terrorist or rebel attacks, electronic attacks (i.e. computer viruses), strikes or pandemics, just to name some examples. During the 1918 flu Pandemic, a high number of the world's population was infected, death rates were high and, Western Samoa for example lost 22% of its population.

A pandemic has direct and indirect impacts. The direct impacts are well understood and the focus of most planning activities. The indirect impacts are not so well understood, in most countries overlooked and thus no appropriate multi-sector preparedness planning (including BCM measures) takes place. As a consequence, it can be assumed that in many countries essential services might break down during a pandemic, adding to the disaster already taking place.

The main cause of the impact on other sectors is absenteeism due to illness, death, care of sick family members or children staying home or fear to leave the home. It can lead to reduction of demand for services, reduced supplies, but also to increases in demand for certain services, while dealing with reduced supplies and absent staff. Without proper preparation and planning, the risk that services will break down is markedly higher and can lead to economic and social disruption.

For example the power & energy sector: Without planning how to protect their critical staff and to maintain production and transmission of power/electricity and for example fuel, countries with an already weak and fragile infrastructures might experience blackouts, especially in case of increased demands. Can anybody of us imagine working without a computer? The whole health sector response would be in deep jeopardy and even more so hospitals that might have to use generators (as long as they have fuel) to run any kind of medical equipment. Communication as well as information and public information capacities might become impossible in areas where it might be needed most. As a consequence, careful planning, exercises and simulations are necessary, in order to prepare to avoid interruptions of essential services.

The Workshop / Seminar on Aviation Business Continuity Planning subsequently continued along three different tracks commensurate with the needs of the aviation sector, i.e. Airlines, Airports and Air Navigation Services, in order to exchange ideas, discuss lessons learnt and prepare inputs for a potential Aviation Public Health Emergency Business Continuity Plan.

II. Business Continuity Planning for Airports

Malaysia Airports Holding informed about its Business Continuity Management approach. They regard it as a «holistic management process that identifies potential impacts that threatens an organization and provides a framework for building resilience and capability for an effective response that safeguards the interest of its key stakeholders, reputation, brand and value creating activities». Business continuity management comprises three components, which are an Emergency Response Plan, a Crisis Management Plan and a Business Recovery Plan. The different phases to establish a Business Continuity Plan are: (Phase 1) Initiation, Management & Risk Assessment; (Phase 2) Business Impact Analysis; (Phase 3a) Strategy, Development and Selection; (Phase 3b) Plan Development and (Phase 3c) Plan, Testing and Maintenance. Within Phase 2, it is pivotal to identify Mission Critical Activities (MCAs) and Recovery Time Objectives (RTOs). Based on this, the Business Continuity Plan has to be developed.

Some major Challenges identified during the development and the implementation of the Business Continuity Plan at Kuala Lumpur International Airport are:

- Difficulty in determining escalation level due to conflict with other emergency escalation terminologies and procedures.
- An airport is an infrastructure / facility based service. It is not possible to create redundancy or duplicate all facilities at other alternate places.
- Different perception from stakeholders on what should be the focus and scope of the BCM.
- Budget constraints.
- Numerous interdependencies (>30 external stakeholders, +/- 30 internal departments).
- Too many commitments of the Airport's operations staff

A successful business continuity exercise was conducted at Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

Hong Kong International Airport reported about its initial considerations regarding Business Continuity Planning in case of a pandemic:

- Public health emergencies have global impacts
- No place is totally isolated and immune
- Airport operations can be severely impacted
- Especially when people & airlines are still flying
- Hong Kong people, and government, expect airport operating as «normal» as possible
- Therefore, need pandemic planning & plans

An early incident / crisis detection is pivotal for a quick reaction to it. By this scope, scale and duration of the scenario can be reduced significantly.

First steps within the business continuity planning process are to ask such basic questions as: «What is a crisis?», «What is not?», how to define a crisis and the aims, scope, roles and responsibilities within the business continuity planning process for the stakeholders involved. It is also important to distinguish between scenarios to plan for and others not. Hong Kong International Airport has practical experiences with different critical events which threatened the continuity of operations, amongst it the road link interruption of June 2008.

III. Business Continuity Planning for Airlines

Cathay Pacific Airways presented its approach to Business Continuity Planning. Its definition is «to maintain crisis management capability designed to respond to, contain and manage to conclusion any major event or situation that threatens the well being of the airline, while at the same time, permit normal operations with minimal disruption».

Based on the following corporate obligations:

The moral obligation to passengers and their families

- the commercial obligation to the owners, shareholders
- and employees of the company for its continued commercial viability.

Cathay Pacific has defined three levels to react in case of a crisis, i.e. Alert Response Level, Serious Response Level and Emergency Response Level. The aims of the Alert Level are to Plan, Stockpile and Communicate, during the Serious Response Level to Test Readiness, Enact, Communicate and Monitor and finally, during the Emergency Response Level, to go for Business Survival,

Conservation of Cash and to Educate the Media. Key steps, Cathay Pacific have prepared for the case of a pandemic:

- Vaccination campaign
- Stocking of PPE/anti-viral stockpiling
- Personnel policies - Special Sick Leave, Variable Staffing, Work from Home, Staff Dispersal
- Handling of Sick Passenger Procedures
- Passenger/crew Isolation, attending to and retrieval
- Intensified cleaning procedures for aircraft & premises/cleaning supplies
- IT requirements for Hong Kong based staff
- Alignment of the airline's plans with external agencies

According to the presentation, it is recommended to have enough cash reserves in hand to cater to the various needs that arise in emergency situations.

Malaysia Airlines reported about its own experiences and lessons learned with the 2009 pandemic. The close coordination with the public authorities, the airport operator and other stakeholders proved to be crucial. Within the company, staff have been categorized as follows:

- Mission Critical (presence at work place is critical to business operations)
- Important (presence at work place may not be critical to business operations but decision making and directions are crucial)
- Necessary / Minor (presence at work place is not critical to business operations)

Additionally, social distancing policies and guidelines were put into place (staff operating from home, meeting guidelines and protocol). Critical processes were reviewed to cope with reduced manpower. Also the service levels with reduced manpower for mission critical processes were under review. Alternate procedures are also an important issue to contemplate during the Business Continuity Planning process.

IV. Business Continuity Planning for Air Navigation Services

ICAO Doc 4444 Procedures for Air Navigation Services, Air Traffic Management (PANS-ATM) contains chapter 15, Procedures related to emergencies, communication failure and contingencies. ICAO Doc 9426 Air Traffic Services Planning Manual contains a paragraph about Contingency Planning (Section 1, Chapter 1, 1.3) too.

However, as CAA Singapore demonstrated through its presentation, it is advisable that staff wellbeing and health are kept upright in order to avoid disruption of services. The above mentioned methods, as well as self-checks, strict rules to prevent sick staff to report for duty and disinfections and record keeping can be additional methods to keep upright operations.

V. Going Forwards

The Seminar/ Workshop suggested forming 3 working groups – one each on Airports, Airlines and ANS Service Providers, to continue the work in each of these sectors and produce a generic document on Business Continuity Management to be presented to the Global RAMT in October 2010.

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