

Chairman's Summary of the Fatigue in Maintenance Engineering Workshop

This conference and workshop was probably a first in aviation. Indeed, in raising awareness and building a common view, it was a ground-breaking meeting on what is a well studied but much misunderstood subject. The conference was acclaimed as a success both in terms of its content and in the numbers of attendees (120) which was the maximum the venue to accommodate.

The inputs from the speakers clarified many fatigue related issues: What is industry's concern? What is fatigue and how does this affect people? How will the "Working Time Directive" affect aviation maintenance and engineering? How will this be regulated? What is the CAA's position? What can we the operators and maintenance organisations do to manage the problem?

The workshop on the second day enabled the attendees to voice their opinions and concerns. A facilitated debate concluded the following:

- Fatigue is an issue that we need to manage, but its importance should not be treated disproportionately to many other issues facing management and staff.
- We pay for performance but fatigue impairs that performance. Are we getting what we want when staff work long hours or are fatigued when they are working?
- The number of working hours is not the issue, fatigue is. Fatigue is a factor of how much rest the workforce have had and in part, we can manage the time available for staff and contractors to rest.
- We need a contract of understanding for shared responsibility between the employees and the employers that buys into the need to manage fatigue.
- For such a contract to work, fatigue management needs to be embedded into the culture of company, led by the management through empowered staff who will act responsibly if they believe they are fatigued to a point greater than the type of task they face.
- There is a duty of care for managers to provide a working environment and shift structure that can manage fatigue as well as protect the corporate well-being from potential litigation.
- Attendees felt a need for legislated requirements, and that JAR-Ops 1 or 3 might be the appropriate vehicle. However, the Working Time Directive will soon come into force and will provide a framework that should be seen in practice before further legislation is considered. This view was endorsed by the CAA.
- We, as a key part of our industry, seek to identify and work to best practice, not legislated minimums.
- Clear and workable guidance is needed as soon as possible, this should be developed by industry in conjunction with the regulators (CAA) and enforcers (HSE). This should produce a "Code of Practice" and the task was awarded to the UK-SMS-CAG to complete by mid 2003 in line with their proposal.
- It will be necessary for each company to apply the Code of Practice in line with their own requirements, but as a minimum should include a risk assessment of the effects of fatigue on the work-in-hand. Safety Management Systems are seen as an appropriate means of managing these risk assessments and avoiding a disproportionate approach to fatigue as a risk to the company.
- Fatigue management and awareness will be a subject to include in our human factors training for both employees and the management team.