

PILOTS' ASSOCIATION RESPONDS TO TIREDNESS INCIDENT REPORT 26/09/2013

The British Airline Pilots' Association (BALPA) has responded to a report from a captain and co-pilot that they both fell asleep at the flight deck on 13 August due to long shifts and a lack of sleep, which was published in a Freedom of Information request to the Civil Aviation Authority and reported in the media today.

This comes as no surprise to BALPA which has repeatedly warned the CAA of the risk of both pilots falling asleep, including in a letter to each member of the CAA board last year. BALPA has also warned the Aviation Minister, Simon Burns MP, who replied that that "...this is not a reported flight safety issue".

Jim McAuslan, BALPA General Secretary, said:

'British pilots want to make every flight a safe flight and tiredness is the biggest challenge they face. As the regulator responsible for UK flight safety the CAA has been far too complacent about the levels of tiredness among British pilots and failing to acknowledge the scale of the underreported problem. In fact the CAA and Government are backing EU cuts to UK flight safety that will increase tiredness among pilots and the risk of dangerous incidents.'

The European Parliament vote on new EU rules on pilot flying hours next week (Monday 30 September) that will cut UK safety standards,

The new EU rules will dilute existing high UK safety standards and introduce weaker EU rules, which lack scientific support or evidence. For instance the new rules will permit a pilot to land an aircraft having been awake for 22 hours or more, with a level of tiredness that is the equivalent of being four times over the legal alcohol limit for flying. Nine out of ten members of the British public said this was of concern to them in a recent poll. Dangerously the EU rules will also give new powers to the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) allowing it to change the rules in the future without the support or scrutiny of politicians in Europe or national governments.

BALPA has called on MEPs voting in the EU Transport Committee on Monday (30 September) to back a motion that would require the European Commission to withdraw its unsafe proposals and to subject them to proper scientific and medical scrutiny. BALPA has also made a complaint of maladministration to the European Ombudsman and argued that the rules should have been based on scientific evidence from the outset.