

Aviation Safety Regulators Are Naïve Says Aircraft Engineers International

Aircraft Engineers International (AEI) has long been warning that aviation regulator complacency will have safety consequences. Therefore, it has come as no surprise that aircraft maintenance technicians have launched a lawsuit against American Airlines management alleging they are being pressured into releasing aircraft back into service that still require repairs and are unsafe.

We are deeply concerned about this situation, but the real questions are:

- 1) How has this situation been allowed to advance to such a state, considering aircraft maintenance is critical to safety?
- 2) Why are passengers allegedly being exposed to avoidable increased risk?

AEI has consistently highlighted the reluctance of national airworthiness authorities to take airlines to task over a lack of compliance with stringent safety regulations. Indeed, with audit inspections announced well in advance and actual audits predominantly carried out in hangar offices with inspectors only checking procedures, etc. rather than witnessing actual maintenance activities on in service aircraft, one could question if regulators are complicit in lowering standards. The situation also highlights loopholes in the current auditing system which will only become worse with the onset of regulatory “risk based” oversight. Under this new scheme airlines will be audited and issued a safety/risk rating. A good rating ensures even less visits from the regulator.

This is a recipe for disaster, according to AEI President Robert Alway: “Wherever we look, we find airlines and maintenance organisations failing to comply with even the most simple and basic regulations, yet audit findings raised by regulators offer absolutely no indication whatsoever as to how safe an airline really is.”

With airlines facing cut-throat competition and ticket prices bearing no relation to the actual cost of performing the flight, it should come as no surprise that airlines pressure the workforce to cut corners in order to save money.

“Passengers need to recognise there are safety consequences to cut backs,” continued Mr. Alway. “It is not just airlines, but also regulatory budgets which are under severe pressure. Therefore, it has never been as important as it is now to ensure that there are real consequences for airlines and managers who choose to avoid their safety responsibilities.”

AEI Secretary General Fred Bruggeman also highlighted that American Airlines holds European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) safety approvals. “Regrettably, we are seeing once again that safety auditors are unable or unwilling to detect safety deficiencies. Situations mirroring the claims made by American Airlines technicians can also be found in Europe and the rest of the world. Weak regulatory oversight is now a global problem, the effect of which is to reduce airline resilience to safety risks. It is, however, the travelling public that could pay the ultimate price because it is they who are facing increased risks.” AEI will continue to work together with regulators to achieve improved regulatory compliance; however, regulators and airlines must stop abusing public trust by continuously claiming safety is paramount while undermining activities which ensure safety does indeed have the highest priority.



Aircraft Engineers International

Engineering excellence to keep them flying safely

The maintaining of aircraft is a high risk activity where the smallest mistake can have catastrophic consequences. Airlines and regulators must lend their full support to the activities of Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineers, Technicians, and Mechanics at all times in order to ensure passengers travel on properly maintained, safe aircraft - Anything less undermines safety and increases risk.

About AEI: Aircraft Engineers International (AEI) was formed in 1971 and represents the collective interests of over 40,000 Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineers in over 30 countries. The AEI mission is to be the global voice of Licensed Aircraft Engineers by providing representation and support in order to promote the highest levels of aviation safety and maintenance standards worldwide.

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