

## Podcast Transcription

### Fly by Night: Captain Dave Chase, February 2021

**Captain Chris Lee** My guest today is MEC Chairman, Captain Dave Chase. Thanks for coming Dave.

**Captain Dave Chase** Hi, Chris.

**Captain Chris Lee** The FedEx MEC has put out a number of communications about the conditions in Hong Kong. Can you talk to the pilots about that?

**Captain Dave Chase** Chris, as the COVID pandemic continues around the world, the situation in Hong Kong has been an ongoing concern. I know the pilots have seen recent headlines concerning a 14-day quarantine upon return to Hong Kong for Hong Kong pilots. The company has announced preparations to relocate those pilots and their families. We're not sure of a timeline there or what's going to happen with those Hong Kong quarantine rules. But today, the FedEx MEC also remains concerned about a separate issue in Hong Kong that affects all pilots entering Hong Kong. Specifically, the treatment of pilots and family members that are either deemed positive or a close contact of another individual that is positive. I understand it's in the same geographic location, but the quarantines and the conditions are different concerns for us.

**Captain Chris Lee** Talk to the pilots about the timeline in Hong Kong.

**Captain Dave Chase** All right. Starting last summer, we saw pilots detained in hospitals and quarantine facilities in Hong Kong. The pilots in the quarantine facilities faced being detained in a high-rise apartment building with no carpeting, no air conditioning, and a one-inch mattress. Pilots in the hospital were detained in facilities with multiple people sharing a bathroom. Some of them were asymptomatic pilots with very sick individuals right next to them. On July 23, the FedEx Master Executive Council, which is the pilots' representatives, passed [Resolution 20-12](#) that called for FedEx to suspend operations in Hong Kong that exposed our crew members and families to the unacceptable risks to their safety, well-being, and mental health due to the governmental policies related to COVID-19. On July 28, 2020, the MEC issued a [press release](#) and that press release stated that FedEx pilots face unacceptable conditions in Hong Kong. I think it's important to point out that after the press release, we were able to operate successfully through Hong Kong without layovers from August through November. However, in November of 2020, FedEx made a unilateral decision to return to Hong Kong layovers. We discovered this during a review of our December trips with our Scheduling Committee. At that time, we asked for a meeting with the company to have them share with us their plan to return to layovers. The FedEx MEC did not believe there was a suitable plan, and we communicated as such. Turning to January of 2021, despite continued attempts to resolve the situation, the FedEx MEC passed another [Resolution 21-01](#). This resolution called for the immediate suspension of operations in Hong Kong to include all layovers that exposed pilots or their families to the unacceptable risks until the Company establishes workable agreements that remove the risks of detention for treatment or quarantine.

**Captain Chris Lee** What are the layover conditions in Hong Kong that are concerning to the union?

**Captain Dave Chase** The FedEx MEC is specifically concerned with the standard of care for COVID positive and close contacts. FedEx pilots risk being placed in facilities and receiving treatment different than they would in the United States. Unfortunately, the company has made assertions about their willingness or ability to remove pilots in any situation, that have proven to be inaccurate.

**Captain Chris Lee** Let's break it down some. What are the conditions in Hong Kong if a pilot is determined to be a close contact?

**Captain Dave Chase** I think first let's remind ourselves what it means to be a close contact. Close contacts are not COVID positive. These are simply pilots that flew, jumpseated, or otherwise had contact with a fellow pilot within the 48-hour period of that individual testing positive. Current government rules in Hong Kong place those close contacts in the quarantine facility, Penny's Bay. I encourage everyone to look at the publicly available reviews and concerns online regarding that facility. However, the Company plan as of December has involved removing pilots via our own jumpseat for close contacts. They explained to ALPA that this plan would involve limited risk of quarantine camps, but in no case to exceed 48 hours. The company has been largely successful in that regard and to their credit, they even agreed to the FedEx MEC's belief that this should extend to Hong Kong-based crew members deemed close contacts, and the company has removed some of those as well. Importantly, we recently had a close contact, Memphis based crew member end up in Penny's Bay. Rather than the 48 hours, he spent six or seven days in the quarantine camp. So needless to say, besides being confined to a room, the conditions you can view online are far below the conditions of treatment the MEC deems acceptable.

**Captain Chris Lee** OK, so now what are the conditions in Hong Kong if a pilot tests positive?

**Captain Dave Chase** Originally, we saw pilots being placed in various hospitals, but now Hong Kong places those pilots that test positive in an expo center turned hospital facility with hundreds of other patients. There are cubicles, but not rooms. The lights are on and off for everyone at the same time. And the bathrooms, including the showers, are communal. Pilots, even when they're asymptomatic, have expressed concern about the number of chest x rays and blood draws they're being given and the MEC has heard concerns regarding cleanliness, safety, privacy, and even dietary concerns.

**Captain Chris Lee** Are there other scenarios different from being either a positive or close contact that pilots are faced with?

**Captain Dave Chase** Yes, Chris, the FedEx MEC's also seen problems with pilots whose testing was inconclusive. We've now had two pilots that were hospitalized until their tests were eventually proven negative. Both of these individuals had multiple blood draws and one reported chest x rays. The FedEx MEC's concerned with this extensive testing being given during the normal course of our trips.

**Captain Chris Lee** OK, moving forward, what's next?

**Captain Dave Chase** As outlined in [Resolution 21-01](#), the FedEx MEC has requested that ALPA National use their resources to communicate our concerns to government and regulators. That's ongoing. Pilots should anticipate more communication in the future in that regard. The FedEx MEC is reviewing our available contractual remedies.

**Captain Chris Lee** Well, Dave, thanks for coming, any final thoughts?

**Captain Dave Chase** Thank you very much, Chris, for having me today. I'll let you know the FedEx MEC are pilots that fly the line, just like their constituents. They experience the same issues that their pilots they represent experience, but they also receive the reporting from all of their pilots. And the MEC recognizes there are considerable fear and concern about the testing and its consequences in Hong Kong for our pilots. The FedEx MEC has expressed concerns regarding the addition of this type of distraction into the challenging flight operations you experience overseas. Between August and December, FedEx pilots operated schedules that avoided layovers in Hong Kong. The MEC and our members are committed to serving our customers and the world economy during this global pandemic, including the movement of life-saving vaccines. However, the FedEx MEC maintains that the health and safety of our membership must have a priority over service and profits.

**Captain Chris Lee** Thanks again for coming and thanks for listening. We'll make sure to put links to all of these resolutions and communications in the transcript section of the podcast. If you have any questions, please utilize the [DART](#) link at [fdx.alpa.org](http://fdx.alpa.org) and as always, be safe out there and we'll see you next time.