

Podcast Transcription

Fly by Night: Captain Dave Chase, COVID-19 Update

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

Captain Dave Chase Thank you, Chris.

Captain Chris Lee In this podcast, let's talk a little bit about some trends and questions that we're receiving from pilots via PDR. But first, let's talk about the PDR system and how it's going with the coronavirus.

Captain Dave Chase Essentially, we have an entire coronavirus team that receives the PDRs. We've assigned two pilots on a rotating basis to actually answer the questions we get. They give us trend reports, specific highlighted emergency items that we need to deal with on a time-sensitive basis and it's just part of our daily meetings going over the specific concerns of the pilots. It was something that's important to the officers and the MEC that we actually make sure as we go through the process we're representing the specific issues that pilots on the line and in the training building bring to us. One challenge we've had with the PDRs since the very beginning is some of them may be a time-sensitive issue. Something's lacking at a particular station or like the PPE would be lacking in a particular station and we're trying to address that for pilots and sometimes there's the lag between the reporting and our ability to go in and talk to the Company about that, which makes some of the issues more difficult to deal with. And when we engage with flight management, we said one of the things that we think is the best way to get a better work environment for the pilots and resolve their issues is to allow us to have our PDR team and their Insite team, combine some of the information and the reporting we're getting. Not in an identified way, but in a way that we can address issues more immediately. And so, when we're answering questions that they can give a better answer to the pilots right away. So, we've engaged to get a safety working group together and we'll see where that progresses in the days ahead. But we're hopeful that that provides us a much better opportunity to solve issues in a more timely way.

Captain Chris Lee And the Company was receptive to that idea?

Captain Dave Chase They're receptive to it. And we'll see if we can work out a way that both sides can be satisfied to be productive. We're certainly not going to start taking on the operational aspects where we're now in control of the operation. But it's a way for us to have the information. If we say, how is something working now and maybe where could it be in the next day or two we'll have a better idea so we can answer pilots in a more immediate way. It also gives us the opportunity to tell them in areas where a pilot may have come to us first, where they're missing something that's important.

Captain Chris Lee And it's important that the pilots continue to send us these PDRs, because that's how we find out what's happening out on the line.

Captain Dave Chase Yes, we're taking the PDRs. Some of them we take the body of the PDR. Sometimes we take the trend information and we share it with management. But it's certainly the way we construct and organize ourselves to meet with the Company and talk to them about what we see not occurring that we would like to have taken care of for the

pilot. It's as simple as the pilots create the issues that we decide to go deal with by what they see not being done on the line.

Captain Chris Lee One of the trends that we're seeing is with PPE, personal protective equipment. Pilots have concerns about the availability. What can you tell me about that?

Captain Dave Chase That we haven't been able to solve the problem and you see it on the news even with nurses and doctors, to be honest with you. But as we represent pilots, we've made it clear to the Company all along that these masks and gloves and the pure Purell wipes rather than Sani-Coms, which are not able to kill the virus, that they need to be available along with the disinfection of the aircraft. That's been important to us. Creating a clean sanitary work environment is important to the pilots. It's important to us. And this is just a portion of what goes into that. We've received some communication from the Company recently that there should be more availability as we move into the days ahead here. And we're looking forward to that.

Captain Chris Lee And speaking of that, the union put out a comm recently asking the pilots to do more.

Captain Dave Chase Yeah, as we wrote, you know, we met with some senior-level management and we made clear, just as we talked about some of the PDR issues where the pilots have been very clear, they're concerned about what happens if they test positive overseas. What's some of the planning going on in terms of these sanitation things and their concerns about the operation of the airline? Then Captain Pat May and the Negotiating Committee, his team met with the Company. And then out of that the next day, there was a social distancing FCIF that was put out. And we saw that as a step in the direction of meeting some of the requests we had. There was concern amongst the pilots that social distancing is somewhat of a hypocrisy with the work environment we're in. So you sit in the cockpit. I'm right next to you. If I'm doing that in the cockpit, when I get to the crew room, should I separate? Why would I do that? And one of the things we want to make sure pilots understand is social distancing can't happen necessarily on the flight deck. But that doesn't mean you don't try to limit all of your other human interactions. So it's not taking them down to zero per day, but it's as few human interactions as you need. So our request to pilots is if you don't need to be an AOC, don't be an AOC. We wanted the Company to do some of the things they did, which is find ways for pilots to go direct to the bus and go out to the plane and have less people on the bus, less interaction. We still would like the Company to come further on having the ramp personnel and some of the load crews being away from the crew. But we want the pilots to look for these opportunities in the training building, in the airplane and every opportunity they get, whether it's the crew van to the hotel to have less people, less interaction and stay safe.

Captain Chris Lee And the Company's put some of those in place. Like you can check-in via your iPad now, you can print from your iPad.

Captain Dave Chase Yes, the Company's done some, but we still see opportunities. As far as the AOC goes, really the request is if you don't need to be in there, don't be in there. I certainly would not go in the training building or the AOC on my time off. If I'm doing a PM or an AM out and back, I would show up, go to the bus, go to the plane, come back in and leave. And please don't find time to organize, shake hands and be around one another. One of the things that's been outstanding from our crews, back to PDR for a minute is, I see an incredible amount of dedication to our crew members wanting to keep each other safe and not just be in a safe environment, but keep each other safe. Part of that is for

their family and part of that is to keep the Company running. And that's one of the things we impress upon the Company is that we see an incredible dedication from our crew members to try and keep ourselves safe, to keep our Company safe. And we want that to be reflected back to the pilots in the procedures and the processes they're willing to give back. So we've seen a lot of progress, but we think there's room to do more.

Captain Chris Lee We also received a lot of questions about aircraft cleaning. Can you give us an update there?

Captain Dave Chase Yeah, the newest FCIF that we've seen over the last couple of days about aircraft cleaning is the latest information. We don't know precisely what that process is. Our original request was come up with a way to document it, put it in ARD for pilots. They'd know when it was done. They've come up with the process of putting it on the yoke. So rather than argue about the specific process, I'm glad to see they're moving ahead with more of the signs. But we see pilots who'll show up on a flight deck where the old catering still there and the plane says it's been cleaned. So I want to applaud progress. And I want to let pilots know we're not done working so they don't feel like they have to continue to report something that we know is a problem. We know that's a problem. I appreciate them letting me know when and where it happened. And we'll follow up on it.

Captain Chris Lee We also have a training area that has to do with training in this current environment and protections that are being put in place in the training building and potentially in the cockpits, too. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Captain Dave Chase A significant amount of our PDRs related to training come with the feeling that there are unnecessary people in the hallway and in the simulator. So we've asked directly to limit those unnecessary people in the simulator, unnecessary events. It's going to be down to the level of should the new hires be bringing their spouses and children in on new hire day? Should extra staff and other people be walking around the building? Should pilots on their day off be inside the building? It's all about limiting the number of people. We've asked for them to teleconference or video conference the ground schools. And we're just trying to be proactive and drive this even further to limit the interactions of pilots.

Captain Chris Lee A big one we're seeing right now is the different country testing procedures, which can include some pretty invasive procedures. What can you tell the pilots about that?

Captain Dave Chase We're aware of those. Those are changing here daily over the last couple of days. We're obviously trying our best to keep up with the FCIFs and the direction given to the pilots. We're talking to flight management about these procedures. We've had concerns since the very beginning that we've expressed that pilots are very concerned about the process or the plan that would take effect if a pilot were to get sick or test positive overseas. And I think a large portion of the concern, relates to this testing and what happens if the pilot does become positive? It seems to be changing daily for us. So we're keeping up with it. And as we have the opportunity to communicate with the pilots a solution here we'll make sure from our end we do that.

Captain Chris Lee We've also been getting questions on testing. I'm a pilot. I want to get tested. I may be symptomatic. What's the union doing about that?

Captain Dave Chase This testing of pilots, we from the beginning were concerned. I think it was even in the latest FCIF about Indianapolis temperature testing that there'd be an opportunity for that type of testing to occur. But actual COVID-19 tests where someone tests you for that at work, we've not advocated for. We do see pilots that asked for that. But in the United States here, that type of testing is not readily available. We do have positive COVID tested pilots, but we also have a number of pilots that are ill that have been told by their doctors, don't get tested. So there aren't enough test kits in the United States. And that's not somewhere we've tried to advocate to bring test kits that aren't necessarily available onto the property and do testing.

Captain Chris Lee Dave, thanks for coming. Any final thoughts?

Captain Dave Chase Yeah, Chris. My final thought would be please continue to send us in the PDRs. Give us the information to advocate for you. Pilots have gone above and beyond throughout this crisis. So like I say, we'll keep working hard. We'll keep pushing for the issues you bring to us through management. And I guess I'll steal your line and say stay safe out there.

Captain Chris Lee Thanks again, Dave, and thanks for listening. If you have any questions or comments, please send me an e-mail to fdxpodcast@alpa.org. And as always, be safe out there and we'll see you next time.