



AIR INDIA VIOLATES FLIGHT DUTY TIME LIMIT; DGCA STAYS MUM

News / Airlines



National carrier Air India has once again been caught violating flight duty time limit (FDTL) of its cabin crew. It was on the Delhi-Australia sector for the past two years, where the airline flew with the same set of crew to test the impact of fatigue on its cabin crew. And with more than 60 follow-ups with the DGCA there is still no action against the errant officials, claim sources.

In 2013 when Air India (AI) began its Australia operation, a unique experiment took place on its commercial flight to Australia. On Delhi-Melbourne-Sydney flights, Air India conducted safety risk analysis assessment on the impact of fatigue on its cabin crew. The tests were done during two landings (Delhi-Melbourne and Melbourne-Sydney) with only one set of cabin crew in each flight.

According to the rules, a flight beyond 14 hours requires two sets of cockpit and cabin crew to handle emergencies. "The plane had two sets of cockpit crew while only one set of cabin crew," says a source from AI's cabin crew. "Moreover, the flight was beyond 15 hours while according to the rules flights beyond 14 hours with the same set of crew are not permissible," he says.

The extra set of crew is needed because in case of an emergency a fatigued crew will not be in a position to conduct an evacuation of passengers. "With the extension of flight duty time limit of the crew to 17 hours the fatigue factor of the crew increases. And they will not be able to evacuate the passengers in 90 seconds in case of an emergency," he says.

Moreover, the cabin crew was told by AI that the airline had sought dispensation from the DGCA to extend their flight limits on its Australia route with the same set of crew for two landings ie Delhi-Melbourne and Melbourne-Sydney. However, in an RTI reply the DGCA said they have not given any such dispensation to AI. (Documents are available with dna).

What was more incriminating was that this happened on a commercial flight and without the passengers being aware about it. "If such risk analyses are done on a commercial flight and anything unfortunate happens, then both the airline as well as the passengers lose their insurance," alleges the source.

When this reporter contacted Maneesh Kumar, Director Air Safety, DGCA he said he would not comment on the issue. Air India refused to comment on the issue in spite of being given two days time for the same.

Since the concerned officials have raised their voice about this violation with the DGCA more than 50 times in the past two years with no results, they have started an online petition campaign to bring it to the notice of the Prime Minister.

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