



ECA
Piloting Safety

PRESS RELEASE

Is European aviation ready for the shift? – New Pilot Fatigue Rules in Effect

As the new EASA Flight Time Limitations (FTL) rules (EU Reg. 83/2014) come into effect today, the industry shifts to a fully harmonised European set of rules aimed at preventing air crew fatigue from constituting a risk to flight safety. At the same time, as any air operator is obliged to proactively manage the safety risks associated with fatigue, both in the cockpit and the cabin, simple compliance with the new rules will not be sufficient anymore. However, with low levels of understanding of the complex new rules, diverging interpretations, and only slow progress towards genuine fatigue risk management at company level, even after a transition period of 2 years, many operators and national authorities are not ready yet for the shift.

After a controversial legislative process in 2013, where adoption by the European Parliament was not certain due to concerns about an insufficient scientific basis, the new rules will now cover all aspects of fatigue risk mitigation, including those which previously were still covered by national legislation, such as time-zone crossing, sleep-disrupting flight schedules (e.g. early morning starts) etc.

“Moving to a harmonised EU-wide system is a logical step to do as pilot fatigue does not stop at national borders” says ECA President Dirk Polloczek. “Therefore, strong scientifically-based FTL rules are a must and we look forward to the operational data-driven scientific review that EASA is mandated to carry out within the next 3 years. This is particularly important for highly fatiguing night flights, sleep-disrupting schedules, and standby rules, where we consider the new rules must be improved.”

As a stand-alone act, the introduction of the new FTL rules will not be able to fully mitigate the risks of fatigue in the cockpit and cabin,” says Didier Moraine Chairman of the ECA FTL Working Group. “This is why setting up a robust [fatigue risk management system](#) inside each company is not only a legal obligation, but also an absolute must for any company that is serious about identifying its own fatigue related risks and then actively mitigating them.”

“Due to their complexity, the new rules constitute a very concrete and immediate challenge” continues Moraine. “Interpreting them correctly and in a harmonised manner will remain difficult not only for the companies and national authorities, but also for the individual pilots. This is why ECA developed an online [FTL Calculator](#) – allowing each pilot to calculate the legal limits for their daily flight duties. Crucially, we trust in EASA to work closely with all stakeholders to ensure correct and uniform interpretation and implementation of the new rules.”

“As our [survey among 6.000 European pilots](#) showed, the application of the new EASA rules is a timely reminder that fatigue is a reality today in Europe’s cockpits,” says ECA Secretary General Philip von Schöppenthau. “And the real extent of the problem is still not reflected in official data as over 70% of all fatigue occurrences are not reported. The good news, however, is that under the new [EU Occurrence Reporting Regulation](#) (Reg. 376/2014) fatigue reporting is no longer a choice but an obligation. Provided that companies have a sound safety culture, based on Just Culture principles, this should encourage pilots and cabin crew to report fatigue, and to do so without fear of reprisals.”

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For further information, please contact:

Dirk Polloczek, ECA President, Tel: +32 2 705 32 93

Philip von Schöppenthau, ECA Secretary General, Tel: +32 2 705 32 93

Note to editors: ECA is the representative body of European pilot associations, representing over 38.000 pilots from across Europe. Website: www.eurocockpit.be