



Safety Imperatives

An Important Message from LEC 150 Leaders

Members of Council 150,

We, your elected ALPA Representatives, feel it is our unfortunate responsibility to draw attention to several very concerning items. These issues have, thus far, been inadequately addressed. They pertain to the very core nature of our chosen profession. Simply put, our Safety Culture is under attack and enough is enough. We can not, in good conscience, continue to wait for our Flight Operations Management team to choose safety over anything else. While their words make for great PR, their actions have not matched those words and have directly led to the unfortunate circumstance in which we presently find ourselves. The “United Next” growth plan has seen a staggering 30% growth in just a few short years. However, that growth has come with strings attached. It has come hand in hand with an orchestrated erosion of our Safety Culture and our profession’s input into it. The FAA has similarly witnessed this and recently stepped in to take substantial action against United Airlines. We have lost the ability to approve new Line Check Pilots, issue type ratings, and have regulator-imposed restrictions on our ability to operate and grow our airline. We will also see an increased FAA presence in our daily operation. We are concerned of the damage already done, and this will be long lasting without an immediate and dramatic course reversal.

Who could’ve seen this coming?

Well, for starters, nearly every pilot. We are the ones who have “skin in the game” on every flight. We are the ones with a pulse on the operation. Our concerns have been continuously brushed aside in favor of activities such as Net Promoter Score modules in CQDL, Pilot Professional Development classes with an emphasis on Company feel-good slides, and APU policing. We’ve had these discussions on our flight

decks nearly every trip, along with topics like “forced” Captain upgrades, and the continually decreasing flight experience levels of Captains, including instructors and Line Check Pilots.

Unfathomably, in the midst of our latest issues, a VP of a PR related department chastised one of our Captains via United’s “Bravo” recognition app for providing a safe and successful flight. Why? Because our Captain chose to use his time focusing on his crew, preflight duties and preparing for a safe flight, rather than coming out to the aisles to give his departure announcement. This is, in a nutshell, the root of the issues we face.

While Flight Ops Management has allegedly spoken to the individual to assure that doesn’t happen again, it is indicative of a much larger issue. This individual appeared to be less concerned about the safe operation of a flight, than whether the Captain was contributing to that flight’s NPS score, and likely this individual’s bonus.

When we were made aware of this occurrence, the indignation expressed amongst ourselves was loud and clear. Change is needed. It must come with safety as the primary, if not ONLY focus. Exemplified by recent actions, Management seems inclined to continue down their path of removing pilot influence from Flight Operations. No longer do we have the SVP of Flight Ops position. Long serving Chief Pilots are leaving their offices and being replaced with Base Directors or whatever they call them now. Make no mistake, this is a prelude to further removing pilots from managing pilots. Human Resources and Labor Relations have never been as far reaching into pilot disciplinary events as they are today, sometimes bordering on harassment of our pilots.

Where does this leave us? Well, for starters, it leaves us as pilots under more scrutiny than ever before. We all need to reinvest in our Safety Culture and do so with vigor. Encourage each other on the flight decks to STOP when rushed, do your best to limit distractions. **WHATEVER IT TAKES.**

As professionals, we are *great* at what we do. None better. However, with new risks, comes a need for increased vigilance on each flight. 99.99% success is simply not good enough. Visitors on the flight deck before departure? Maybe ask the FAs to have them stop up afterwards if you’re not completely finished with your preflight duties. Self evaluate and ask if you’re truly ready to be an LCP or a new CA, or are you just chasing a paycheck? A few weeks at TK and OE will not make you ready if you aren’t already. Communicate with each other openly. Don’t skip probationary reports nor merely check the boxes with “great job”. Insist on good debriefings of appropriate items. These are key elements and tools to defend against risk and maintain a safe operation. Refocus on mentoring not just our new pilots, but each other. We are a half step away from the crisis that has been marching steadily towards us. Its now on our doorstep.

The members of your MEC are engaged with Flight Ops Management. We have provided suggestions for restoring our Safety Culture, though it ultimately remains to be seen if they are finally acted upon. The rapid execution of United Next and its promise of financial windfall has been blindly setting us up for this failure, despite our warnings to them which have previously been brushed aside. Hopefully, the FAA action will open some of their eyes and ears to the pitfalls within the changes they steadfastly pursue. Meanwhile, we all need to manage the new risk environment we operate in. The media, the FAA, and our passengers now have their attention focused upon us, the pilots of United Airlines. Every minor issue will be heavily scrutinized. Stay safe and stay out of the headlines.