



Issued: 18 July 2022

Commercial, Organisational and Client Pressure in Flight Operations

This Safety Notice contains recommendations regarding operational safety.

Recipients must ensure that this Notice is copied to all members of their staff who need to take appropriate action or who may have an interest in the information (including any 'in-house' or contracted maintenance organisations and relevant outside contractors).

Applicability:	
Aerodromes:	Not primarily affected
Air Traffic:	Not primarily affected
Airspace:	Not primarily affected
Airworthiness:	Not primarily affected
Flight Operations:	All including AOC Holders, Part NCC and Part SPO Operators
Licensed/Unlicensed Personnel:	All Crew Members

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this Safety Notice (SN) is to highlight commercial, organisational and client pressure (hereafter referred to as commercial pressure) which has been highlighted as a contributing factor to a number of aircraft incidents. Whether perceived or actual, this pressure can have a detrimental impact on key operational decisions, particularly in marginal conditions.
- 1.2 Commercial pressure is not exclusive to operators offering flights for financial remuneration. It may also occur in non-commercial flights, such as those conducted under Part-NCC and Part-SPO.
- 1.3 Whilst client pressure may be more prevalent in those operations where crew members are interacting directly with passengers (e.g. in business aviation and rotorcraft operations), the potential impact of commercial pressure on airline operations should also be considered by airlines and appropriate mitigations applied.
- 1.4 The financial challenges that some operators have experienced because of the COVID-19 pandemic may increase the likelihood of commercial pressure being felt by operating crew members.
- 1.5 ORO.GEN.110 (c) of UK Regulation (EU) No. 965/2012 states that the "operator shall maintain a system for exercising operational control over any flight operated under the terms

of its certificate, SPO authorisation or declaration". This should cover at least the initiation, continuation and termination or diversion of each flight.

2 Identifying Commercial and Client Pressure

2.1 The source of commercial and client pressure may include:

- a) Direct pressure from the passenger(s).
- b) Unintended pressure from the passenger(s), due to status or urgency (e.g. medical emergency).
- c) Undue pressure from the operator's commercial department.
- d) Undue pressure from the operator's flight operations management personnel.
- e) Undue pressure from ground operations staff.
- f) Crew members' awareness (or personal perception) of the financial position of the organisation.
- g) Crew members' awareness (or personal perception) of reputational damage caused by operational delays, cancellations, or diversions.

2.2 This pressure may lead to various outcomes, including:

- a) Operations personnel accept a flight to an aerodrome or landing site that has marginal limits, such as performance criteria or restricted operating times.
- b) Flight crew initiate, or continue a flight, despite weather conditions below the applicable minimum for the operator.
- c) Flight crew continue an unstable approach and/or rushed approach.
- d) Flight crew operate outside flight time limitation (FTL) limits, and/or when suffering from fatigue.
- e) Flight crew depart with unserviceable equipment and/or aircraft defects, outside the scope of the Minimum Equipment List (MEL).
- f) Poor decision making and a deterioration in crew resource management (CRM).
- g) Crew members do not report an incident or potential safety hazard that may cause a delay to the flight.

3 Compliance/Action to be Taken

3.1 All operators should:

- a) Consider commercial pressure as a hazard within the scope of the safety management system and mitigate the associated risks.
- b) Ensure they fulfil their responsibilities under ORO.GEN.110 of UK Regulation (EU) No. 965/2012, Operator Responsibilities.
- c) Ensure that the system for exercising operational control is adequately described in the operations manual and is understood by operations personnel, crew members and the operator's commercial department, where applicable.
- d) Ensure that the system for operational control describes how the tasking process separates the customer/client/passenger from the crew member(s).
- e) Provide clear communication channels and adequate support to operating crew members to enable appropriate decisions to be made.
- f) Promote a just culture that encourages crew members to report occurrences of actual/perceived client or commercial pressure.

- g) Ensure that crew report times provide adequate time for crew members to discuss the operational risks and make suitable decisions.
- h) Include commercial pressure awareness in initial and recurrent crew member training.
- i) Consider internal safety surveys to measure the perceived prevalence of commercial pressure.
- j) Establish and publish a 'conflict of interest' policy.

3.2 All crew members should:

- a) Ensure they fulfil their crew members responsibilities in accordance with CAT.GEN.MPA.100, NCC.GEN.105 and SPO.GEN.105 of UK Regulation (EU) No. 965/2012, Articles 68 and 69 of the Air Navigation Order 2016, and the company operations manual.
- b) When communication facilities allow, involve operations personnel in decision making processes.
- c) Brief passengers on the importance of limiting flight crew interaction/interference, especially during critical phases of flight (when appropriate based on type of aircraft and operation).
- d) Report occurrences of actual/perceived commercial pressure through the operator's occurrence reporting mechanisms.

4 Further Information

The CAA's [CAP1864, Onshore Helicopter Review Report](#), includes further detail and guidance on the issue of client and commercial pressure in the onshore helicopter sector. Many of the principles may also apply to other sectors of the industry, including fixed wing operations.

5 Queries

Any queries or requests for further guidance as a result of this Safety Notice should be addressed to the organisation's Flight Operations Inspector. Non-AOC holders should contact NCC-SPO@caa.co.uk.

6 Cancellation

This Safety Notice will remain in force until further notice.