



## Flight Operations Briefing Notes Cabin Operations Effective Briefings for Cabin Operations

### I Introduction

A safe flight starts with good planning, and good planning for a flight starts with briefings. Briefings are a very important part of any flight preparation.

Different briefings take place before the flight:

- The Purser to cabin crew preflight briefing
- The flight crew to cabin crew preflight briefing
- The passenger preflight safety briefing.

**Note:** *The passenger preflight safety briefing is addressed in the Unplanned Ground Evacuation Flight Operations Briefing Note.*

There may also be other briefings during the flight, for example during unusual, abnormal or emergency situations.

The aim of briefings is to establish a clear plan of action, communicate and exchange information, to ensure there is a common understanding between all crewmembers.

The aim of this Flight Operations Briefing Note is to enable the cabin crew to:

- Plan and prepare briefings
- Perform successful briefings
- Improve communication and coordination onboard the aircraft.

**Note:** *The word "Purser" refers to Senior Cabin Crewmember.*

## II Background Information

Briefings are identified as being a crucial ingredient to effective crew resource management to:

- Ensure open communication between the flight crew, the cabin crew and the passengers
- Promote teamwork
- Ensure that task sharing and the workload is evenly distributed
- Set the expectations and standards for the flight.

The lack of some of these elements has been cited in many accidents and incident reports as a contributing factor, for example:

- A lack of communication and coordination between the flight crew and the cabin crew
- Misunderstandings due to ineffective communication
- Errors, due to heavy workload
- Errors, due to intentional/unintentional deviation from procedures.

An effective briefing is a valuable tool for cabin crew and flight crew to help manage errors and improve outcomes.

## III Objectives of Crew Briefings

Briefing should provide a clear picture of the flight ahead, and build a common understanding amongst the crew of the expectations of the flight.

A successful briefing should be short, interesting and detailed, and should include teamwork, communication, coordination, planning and anticipating possible unplanned events:

- **Team Building and Teamwork**

Many cabin crew and flight crew are faced with the challenge of constantly working with different colleagues, often with colleagues that they have never met or worked with before. However, they are expected to work in very close proximity for long periods of time. In this case, it is important to quickly establish teamwork and **synergy**.

Good team performance depends on **synergy**, which means working together. Synergy is a vital ingredient to effective teamwork.

The conditions for synergy are:

- A shared goal
- A clear crew structure
- Clear task allocation
- Team spirit
- Good Leadership.

The structure of the cabin crew ensures that crewmembers have specific roles, and very specific duties. The application of good Crew Resource Manage (CRM) within a crew creates the right balance for the crew to work as an effective team.

For a team to be successful, they must be able to talk to each other, share information, listen to each other and be assertive, when necessary.

- **Encourage Open Communication**

A good briefing must encourage open, interactive communication between all crewmembers, emphasizing the importance of questions, input from crewmembers, and exchanging information.

- **Crew Coordination and Workload Distribution**

The briefing establishes the chain of command, the leadership. The Purser organizes the workload and duties of the cabin crew, and ensures that the cabin crewmembers understand their responsibilities.

The workload must be evenly distributed amongst the crewmembers to avoid individuals from work overload, which may distract attention from critical tasks, and lead to errors.

- **Planning and Time Management**

Cabin crew activities should be planned, based on the flight time, the expected flight conditions, the Standard Operating Procedures of the Operator, and the service requirements. Cabin crewmembers should be encouraged to prioritize tasks during periods of heavy workload, and according to flight conditions.

- **Unplanned Events**

Briefings are the ideal moment for cabin crew and flight crew to discuss the importance of safety duties and responsibilities, to ensure crew communication, coordination and crew awareness during unplanned events. Highlight the need for the cabin crew to:

- Respond promptly and efficiently to any unusual, abnormal or emergency situation
- Communicate with flight crew and Purser.

## III.1 When to Perform the Cabin Crew Briefing

Cabin crew preflight briefings and flight crew to cabin crew preflight briefings should be performed before each duty period. In most countries, cabin crew briefings are mandatory and are required by the national aviation authority regulations.

Sufficient time should be spent on the briefing to ensure that all crewmembers are familiar with their operating position and duties. The time will vary depending on the number of crew, size of aircraft, area of operation, etc.

When possible, the preflight briefings should be held in a designated briefing room. If this is not possible, the briefing may be performed onboard the aircraft, before passenger boarding begins.

## III.2 The Role of the Purser

The Purser is responsible for all the cabin crewmembers, and is identified as the leader of the cabin crew. The Purser distributes the workload and tasks to the cabin crewmembers.

The Purser is responsible for ensuring that all Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and emergency procedures are performed by the cabin crew, in accordance with the operator's policies, procedures and Cabin Crew Operating Manual.

The Purser is the communication link between the cabin crew and the flight crew. The Captain informs the Purser of any technical, or operational problems. The Purser then informs the other cabin crewmembers.

In every successful team, there are leaders and followers. Followers play a complementary role to leaders. A follower plays a supporting role, and every successful leader needs support.

The Purser, as the leader, is someone who through word, action and example can influence the behavior and actions of others. A leader has the capacity to share the goals of the team, understand the needs of the team, and motivate the team to achieve their goals. Good leadership requires teamwork. The quality of the leader depends on their relationship with the other members of the team.

It is important to remember that there is a difference between authority and leadership: Leadership is an acquired skill, whereas authority is assigned. A good Purser has the correct balance of both.

A good Purser has the acquired knowledge, skills, expertise and professionalism to motivate the cabin crew and inspire confidence.

It is important that Pursers receive appropriate training, and have the necessary skills and expertise to perform their tasks, including leadership and briefing skills.

## IV Effective Preflight Briefings

### IV.1 Briefing Techniques

The briefing is addressed to all cabin crewmembers, and is performed by the Purser (senior cabin crewmember). The expectations, tone and the standards for the flight are set during this briefing.

The Purser must keep in mind the main objectives of the briefing, as well as important information specific to the flight.

A good tip to conduct an effective briefing is to use the **“A, B, C rule”**:

- **A for Appropriate:** The briefing should be relevant and appropriate to the flight. It should highlight the specific details of the flight. A briefing should be prepared for each individual flight otherwise it may become routine and repetitive. The Purser should:
  - Plan and prepare the briefing
  - Select the relevant information before the briefing.
- **B for Brief:** A briefing should be as the word suggests, “brief”. The Purser should keep the briefing short to ensure that the attention of all cabin crewmembers is focused on the most important points.
- **C for Clear and Concise:** The briefing must be understood by all crewmembers. It should be interactive, and encourage cabin crewmembers to share information and ask questions. The Purser should adopt good communication methods to encourage feedback.

### IV.2 Setting the Tone for Effective Teamwork

The briefing is the starting block for a high performance team. The Purser must create an environment where open, interactive communication is encouraged. The Purser can use some practical communication skills to create such an environment, using positive language and body language. For example, the use of the word “we” encourages all crewmembers to participate and contribute to the flight. The Purser should:

- Use professional and friendly language
- Listen with patience and not interrupt others
- Ask the cabin crewmembers if they have any questions or comments
- Encourage the cabin crew to exchange information and ideas at all times
- Answer questions directly
- Use eye contact, as appropriate.

## IV.3 The Purser to Cabin Crew Preflight Briefing

As previously mentioned the briefing should focus on the most important points relevant to the flight.

The cabin crew briefing should cover the following points:

- **Introductions:** The preflight briefing must always start with professional, respectful introductions, It is important that the Purser invite the cabin crew to introduce themselves, particularly as the cabin crewmembers may not know each other.
- **Flight details:** For example, the flight number, destination(s), departure time, estimated time of arrival, aircraft registration.
- **Special flight information:** For example, passenger loads, special requirements for passengers, any identified maintenance issues that may affect the flight.
- **Workload distribution, task sharing and responsibilities:** Clearly define the duties and responsibilities of each cabin crewmember, to ensure that all cabin crewmembers are prepared and expectations are clear. The Purser should take into account the rank and operating experience of the cabin crewmembers when distributing the tasks. The Purser should ask safety related questions to ensure that each crewmember understands their position on board the aircraft.
- **Crew Communication and Coordination:** Encourage the cabin crew to immediately report and communicate any unusual, abnormal or emergency situations to the Captain and the Purser. Then ensure that all crewmembers have a clear picture of the situation.
- **Review of the operating procedures:** To ensure that the cabin crew understands the importance of performing their duties in accordance with the Operator's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and emergency procedures. When the procedures are understood and adhered to, they provide a common ground and understanding for the entire crew, and ensure crew coordination at all times.
- **Questions:** It is important to provide the cabin crewmembers with the opportunity to ask questions, in order to clarify that the entire cabin crew as understood the items discussed during the briefing. Many Operators have cabin crews based in different locations throughout the world. The Purser should take into account such cultural aspects and remember that not all crewmembers may have the same understanding.

Cabin crewmembers must be encouraged to report to the Purser, or the flight crew, anything that they feel may compromise the safety of the flight.

## IV.4 The Flight Crew to Cabin Crew Preflight Briefing

Although the work of the flight crew and cabin crew is very different in nature, the flight crew and the cabin crew work as one crew, with a common goal, the safe completion of the flight.

The sharing of information from the cockpit to the cabin, and from the cabin to the cockpit is essential to the safety of the flight.

The most important Standard Operating Procedure an Operator can adopt to ensure flight crew and cabin crew communication and coordination is a **flight crew to cabin crew preflight briefing**. The flight crew to cabin crew briefing should encourage open two-way communication, teamwork and coordination.

The pre-flight briefing should include the following topics:

- **Introductions:** The flight crew to cabin crew preflight briefing must always start with professional, respectful introductions,
- **The en-route weather:** To determine if areas of turbulence are anticipated during the flight, and to manage and secure the cabin in a timely manner.
- **The estimated flight time:** The flight time may be shorter or longer than expected. This information will help the Purser with time management to organize cabin activities.
- **Unusual Situations:** For example, armed escorts traveling onboard.
- **Cockpit entry procedures**
- **Sterile cockpit rule:** The sterile cockpit procedures should be discussed, for example the signals, and procedures to be applied when the sterile cockpit rule is in effect. During this briefing, the Purser and Captain should establish the circumstances in which it is acceptable to call the flight crew when the sterile cockpit rule is in effect.
- **Emergency and communication procedures**
- **Anything that the flight crew or the cabin crews need to discuss related to the flight.** (for example, special cargo, flight crew meals etc..).



## V Summary of Key Points

- Operators should allocate a specific period of time and area to ensure that a detailed cabin crew preflight briefing is performed.
- Operators should include a flight crew to cabin crew preflight briefing as part of their Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- An effective briefing should be short, interesting and detailed. The briefing should include teamwork, communication, and coordination, planning and anticipating possible problems.
- Operators should ensure that Purser receive appropriate training, and have the necessary skills to perform their tasks, including leadership and briefing skills.
- Operators should ensure that all cabin crewmembers receive Crew Resource Management (CRM). Cabin crew and flight crew should be encouraged to use CRM as part of their work practice, to enhance team performance, and more importantly, reduce the risk of errors.

## VI Associated Flight Operations Briefing Notes

The following Flight Operations Briefing Notes provide additional information about this subject:

- **Crew Communication**
- **Turbulence Threat Awareness**
- **Unplanned Ground Evacuation**

## VII Regulatory References

- JAR-OPS 1 – IEM Ops 1.1000 (c) – Senior Cabin Crew Training - <http://www.jaa.nl/>
- Federal Aviation Authority – Advisory Circular 120-51E - Crew Resource Management Training
- Federal Aviation Authority – Advisory Circular 120-48 – Communication and coordination between flight crewmembers and flight attendants

**Note:** The FAA AC publications can be found on: <http://www.airweb.faa.gov/>.

## VIII Airbus References

- A318/A320/A321, A330, A340 and A380 Cabin Crew Operating Manuals (CCOM)
- Getting to Grips with Cabin Safety (Brochure)

## IX Additional Reading Materials / Websites References

- National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) – Aviation Safety Studies & Special Report – Emergency Evacuation of Commercial Airplanes (Safety Study SS--00-01):  
**[http://www.nts.gov/publicn/A\\_Stu.htm](http://www.nts.gov/publicn/A_Stu.htm)**
- Australian Transportation Safety Board (ATSB) - Aviation safety – Aviation Publication - Evacuation Commands for Optimal Passenger Management (02-May-2006): **<http://www.atsb.gov.au/>**
- Flight Safety Australia - The Big Brief – Cabin crew -March – April 2001
- Flight Safety Australia - Listen Up – cabin crew- July – August 2001

*These publications are available on the Flight Safety Australia website:*  
**<http://www.casa.gov.au/fsa/>**

- Flight Safety Foundation – Cabin Crew Safety November - December 1999 -  
**<http://www.flightsafety.org/home.html>**.
- Briefings Reference Manual – Dédale Europe

This FOBN is part of a set of Flight Operations Briefing Notes that provide an overview of the applicable standards, flying techniques and best practices, operational and human factors, suggested company prevention strategies and personal lines-of-defense related to major threats and hazards to flight operations safety.

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