



About this abstract:

High-Level Aviation Committee Presents Findings to Civil Aviation Minister

The leadership committee of the Airline Users Rights and Grievances Redressal Forum (AIRGRF), headed by Chief Patron Shri N K Premachandran MP, along with President Biji Eapen, Vice President Adv. Sunil Jose Jacob, and Joint Secretary Anil Sreenivasan, met Honourable Civil Aviation Minister Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia ji on August 9th. The committee presented a comprehensive report titled "Safety First: Elevating Aviation Safety and Passenger Rights in India."

This abstract meticulously highlights safety protocol shortcomings and offers substantiated regulatory recommendations. Recent passenger safety issues, such as DGCA violations by Go Air and Scoot Air, VietJet's 12-hour delay in Mumbai, and 26 unruly passenger incidents, underscore the need for improved safety measures in India's growing aviation sector.

Proposed actions, including enhanced training and hazardous material management, align with CAPA India's alert emphasize the necessity for an autonomous aviation safety framework, akin to the UK CAA. India's rise from 112th to 55th in the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme rankings underscores the urgency of bolstering safety protocols.

In summary, this abstract emphasizes the imperative of regulatory enhancements and safety measures within India's aviation sector.

For your feedback or any questions or clarifications about the abstract, please don't hesitate to reach out. We're here to provide more information and address any inquiries you may have:

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SAFETY FIRST: ENHANCING AVIATION SAFETY AND PASSENGER RIGHTS IN INDIA

Abstract

The abstract titled “Safety First- Enhancing Aviation Safety and Passenger Rights in India” focuses on enhancing aviation safety and passenger protection in India. It examines regulatory, technological, and legal aspects to improve air travel safety and passenger experience. With India’s aviation sector experiencing rapid growth, ensuring safety is paramount due to increased incidents, human errors, and security threats. Recent events have heightened concerns about air travel, underscoring the urgency of safety measures.

Aviation sector privatization facilitated fiscal changes and collaboration between airlines and airports for safety and security. However, competition from low-cost carriers affected pay and working conditions. The liberalization of regulations and growth of low-cost airlines intensified competition, potentially compromising safety. Maintaining safety remains crucial as the industry evolves.

Evidence-Based Call for Passenger Rights and Aviation Safety Reforms in India!

In 2023, the first half, Indian airlines faced alarming incidents, raising concerns over safety and passenger well-being. Despite DGCA regulations, Go First, and Scoot Air left passengers behind, and VietJet stranded 300 travellers without essentials for 12 hours at Mumbai airport. Recent security lapses at Lucknow airport have compounded the issues, demanding urgent regulatory reforms in India, the third-largest domestic aviation market.

The IATA report on the global rise of unruly incidents by 37% in 2022 underscores the urgency to address safety issues. The surge in unruly passenger behaviours, with 26 reported cases in 2023 in India, including dangerous goods and smoking onboard, necessitates a thorough review of aviation regulations. Among the reported incidents, 11 severe behaviours posed potential risks of in-flight fire and fatal damages.

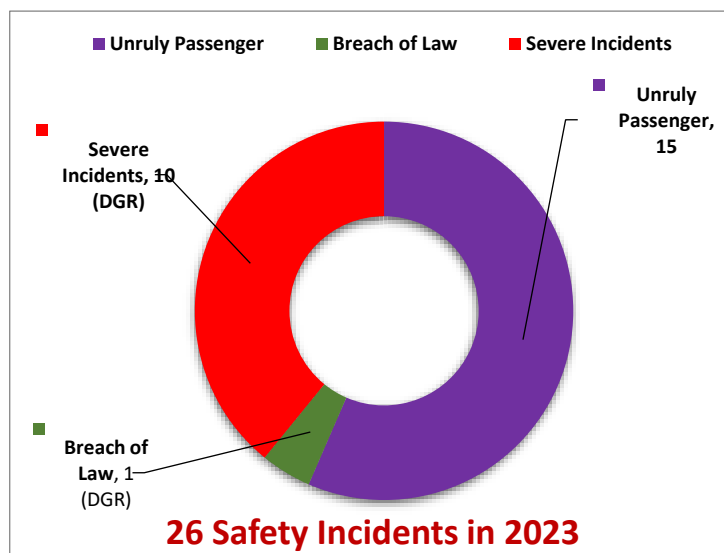
Safety lapses must be treated as non-negotiable, requiring immediate attention for the well-being of passengers and crew. An evidence-based regulatory review is imperative, focusing on rigorous training, monitoring, audits, and proactive risk mitigation. It's time to prioritize passenger safety and rights for a secure air travel experience!

Government-Ensured Air Safety: Committed to Protecting Passengers

Government and international agreements protect air passenger rights, prioritizing safety and facilities. The Chicago Convention and Indian law outline crucial elements:

1. **Safety Measures:** The Chicago Convention establishes universal safety standards for member states like India to ensure secure air travel.
2. **Right to Safety:** Airlines must implement necessary safety measures, ensuring passengers' right to a secure journey.
3. **Baggage Rights:** Passengers must be informed about baggage rules, and airlines should handle baggage responsibly, providing compensation for loss or damage, as per IATA /DGCA regulations.

Other passenger rights include facilities, assistance for PRM (Persons with Reduced Mobility), compensation for delays/cancellations, and the right to refund, governed by DGCA.



#	Eleven incidents related to dangerous goods - in 2023
	Smoking in aircraft lavatories (severe incident):
1)	January 3 -Incident on AI-142, Paris-Delhi, 6 th December, reported on 3 rd January.
2)	January 25 -- Two passengers on Air India -Male to Mumbai flight
3)	January 31 -One passenger on Spice Jet destined for Cochin.
4)	February 18 -Blogger smoking on an Indigo flight from Mumbai to Ranchi
5)	March 4 - A man on Air India AI 763 Kolkata- Delhi flight
6)	March 5 - a 24-year-old woman on Indigo flight 6E 716 Kolkata- Bangalore
7)	March 10 - A passenger on AI130, the London-Mumbai flight
8)	March 16 - Passenger from Assam to Bengaluru, IndiGo flight 6E 716
9)	May 7 Passenger on Akasa Airlines-arrested for smoking Beedi
10)	July 8, AI188 Toronto-Delhi passenger smoked in the lavatory and damaged the lavatory door
11)	Drinking Alcohol on Domestic Flights: Two passengers illicitly brought and consumed alcohol on an Indigo flight from Delhi to Patna.-9 th January

#	Pee-gate & unruly behaviours - repeated incidents- 2023
1)	Air India pee-gate issue on 26.12. 2022, delayed 42 days for reporting-Jan 03,2023
2)	A pee-gate repeated on an American Airlines to Delhi on March 5, 2023
3)	Flight 6E 12 from Istanbul to Delhi on December 16, 2022 -passenger fought with the crew about meals.
4)	A spice jet on 23 rd January offloaded unruly fliers on a Delhi Hyderabad flight for misbehaving with female cabin crew
5)	Two IndiGo flyers traveling from Dubai to Mumbai were drunk and misbehaved on March 23, and police arrested them.
6)	A <u>drunk male</u> passenger vomited in the aisle and defecated around the toilet on an IndiGo Guwahati-Delhi flight. -On 26 March 2023
7)	Two SpiceJet pilots grounded for celebrating Holi while flying, risking the lives of the flyers on the Delhi-Guwahati flight in March 2023
8)	Air India pilot invited lady friend to the cockpit and asked crew to serve food & drinks – Dubai-Delhi - February 27, report on 21 st April 2023
9)	A drunk Swedish national allegedly molested an indigo flight crew member onboard a Bangkok-Mumbai flight - 6E-1052 on 1 st April 2023.
10)	AI 111 Delhi-London flight on 10 th April 2023 due to an 'unruly' passenger onboard; the flight returned to Delhi.
11)	In-flight urination under the influence of alcohol - an Indian traveling from New York to Delhi on an American Airlines flight AA292 on 24 th April 2023 allegedly urinated on his co-passenger
12)	IndiGo flight to Qatar became viral video site when passengers gathered in aisle to Choudhary's song at '37,000' feet, raising air safety concerns.
13)	May 29 AI882 Goa to Delhi- passenger physically assaulted a crew member.
14)	24-Jun-2023 AI 866 Mumbai-Delhi - urinating and spitting
15)	9 July 2023 -AI301 Sydney-Delhi behaved unacceptably.

Air Safety Challenges in India: Prioritizing Passenger Security

Recent incidents in Indian airlines have brought passenger safety to the forefront, shedding light on severe challenges in dealing with unruly behaviours. With 26 reported incidents this year, it is evident that aviation safety needs to be prioritized, urging the implementation of regulatory reforms across all stakeholders in the industry.

- **Incidents related to disruptive behaviours:** Among the incidents, fifteen cases involved unruly passenger behaviours, intoxicated travellers, and pilot misconduct, all of which compromised safety and security onboard flights.
- **Incidents related to dangerous goods:** The eleven incidents were related to dangerous goods, with human errors risking severe accidents, in-flight fires, and fatal damage.

These alarming occurrences have highlighted significant safety shortcomings, leading to eleven human errors or safety lapses and 15 security-related issues caused by unruly passengers and airline officials. These incidents are particularly concerning considering India's position as the third-largest domestic aviation market.

To address these challenges, immediate action is imperative within the Indian aviation industry.

Air Safety Challenges in India: Drawing Lessons from Incidents for Review

In the wake of recent air safety challenges in India, a crucial need arises to draw valuable lessons from incidents for a comprehensive review.

Safety Breaches and Lapses Concerns with Passenger Handling:

In 2023, several incidents highlighted air safety challenges in India, warranting stricter enforcement and prevention measures to protect passenger safety. These challenges encompass various areas:

Smoking in aircraft Lavatories and Drinking Alcohol on Domestic Flights

1. **Prohibition on Carrying Prohibited Items:** Passengers smuggling prohibited items and engaging in smoking and alcohol consumption on domestic flights are severe offenses under regulatory measures.
2. **Conceptual Process for Hazardous Materials:** Airline employees must detect, identify, classify, and prevent hidden hazardous materials carried by passengers in their baggage or on their person to ensure air safety.
3. **Human Error and Safety Lapse:** Oversight or unintentional safety lapses, including the validity of DG certifications and acquired knowledge, can lead to failures in preventing hazardous materials.

Unruly and Disruptive Behaviours: passengers misbehaving, opening emergency exits, and displaying inappropriate behaviour towards crew members.

- Unruly and disruptive behaviours among passengers, such as misbehaving, attempting to open emergency exits, and displaying inappropriate behaviours towards crew members, have become significant concerns in the aviation industry.
- Airlines and regulatory authorities must take strict measures to address such behaviours and enforce zero-tolerance policies to ensure a safe and pleasant travel experience for all onboard.

Safety Breaches and Lapses Concerns with Cargo Handling:

Identifying and handling dangerous goods is crucial to reducing risks in the aviation industry.

Specific Incidents Illustrating Safety Lapses:

1. **Hydrogen Peroxide Misdeclaration (2011):** Falsely declaring "Hydrogen Peroxide" as "medical equipment" on a flight could have resulted in a catastrophic disaster.

2. Laptop Sparks and Flames (2017): Improper handling of electronic devices led to sparks and flames on board an aircraft.
3. Cargo Compartment Smoke (2018): Incidents of smoke in the baggage compartment underscore the importance of strict cargo handling protocols.
4. Spice Jet Suspension (October 2021): Spice Jet faced suspension for accepting wrongly declared lithium batteries.
5. Air India Suspension (April 2022): Air India received suspension due to irregular handling of dangerous goods.
6. High-Temperature Indication (September 2022): A flight carrying radioactive material experienced a high-temperature indication, emphasizing proper hazardous goods handling.

Risk Factors and Mitigating Risks in Handling Dangerous Goods in the Aviation Industry

Smoking Hazards on Aircraft: Evidence of Severe Consequences

Throwing cigarette butts or matches in lavatory trash bins is an extremely dangerous act with grave implications. These bins often contain flammable materials like paper towels and alcohol-based sanitizer-used wipes, making them potential fire hazards. In worst-case scenarios, such actions can lead to a catastrophic fire onboard the aircraft, endangering the lives of passengers and crew.

Incidents worldwide attest to the seriousness of this issue. Tragically, on Brazilian Airlines Varig, 123 deaths occurred due to a similar incident. Air Canada also witnessed 23 deaths in a similar situation. In October 2022, an El Al flight encountered a toilet fire caused by a passenger's lit cigarette; fortunately, the crew managed to control the situation, averting a more significant disaster.

These examples highlight the critical need to address and prevent such unsafe practices, emphasizing the importance of enforcing strict regulations against airplane smoking.

Spotting Deficiencies in Safety & Security Frameworks

In aviation safety, identifying and addressing deficiencies in safety and security frameworks is crucial to ensuring passenger well-being and protecting the industry. Several pressing concerns have come to light, including incidents involving prohibited items and mishandling dangerous goods.

1. Addressing Prohibited Items and Security Lapses on Flights in India

The presence of prohibited items on flights in India, such as matchsticks, lighters, and liquor, remains a significant security concern. Smoking in aircraft lavatories, particularly on flights bound for Gulf countries, is reportedly common, indicating potential security lapses. Despite these occurrences, the response from the cabin crew often involves merely confiscating the items without further reporting. Strengthening security measures and enforcing strict adherence to regulations is crucial to ensure flight safety.

2. Lithium Batteries: A Global Airline Safety Concern and Indian Shipping Risks

Lithium batteries in devices like phones and laptops are a significant airline safety concern due to incidents worldwide. Proper handling and storage are vital to prevent in-flight fires. Over 62 cases of overheated lithium batteries were reported by the FAA in 2022, causing passenger injuries. In February 2023, United Airlines hospitalized 4 passengers after a laptop started a fire, and Spirit Airlines, on March 2023, hospitalized 10 passengers due to a battery on fire in an overhead bin.

Taking urgent action is crucial to tackle the risk posed by lithium batteries in India and ensure aviation safety. Shipments lacking vital information bypass safety requirements, including proper identification and lithium content details.

Carrier competition complicates rule enforcement in the domestic aviation sector. Addressing lithium battery risk is essential for comprehensive safety measures to protect aviation from potential hazards. Addressing even a tiny battery risk is crucial for aviation safety.

3. Airmail Safety: Mitigating Hazards for Secure Postal Transportation

Airmail, often carrying hazardous items like flammable substances, explosives, and radioactive materials, requires special handling by airlines and postal services. However, inadequate packaging, labeling, and documentation pose safety risks to airline staff, passengers, and cargo. Incidents involving prohibited lithium batteries persist. Varying screening procedures across countries exacerbate the problem.

To address this, India must establish comprehensive training and documentation systems in line with international regulations, prioritizing safety. Implementing robust protocols per UPU will enhance safety measures and ensure compliance with ICAO Technical Instructions and IATA Table 1.5. A .

4. Leveraging Industry Veterans for DG Training and Credibility of Certification

Considering the technical complexity of DG training and handling, industry veterans with substantial experience are the ideal candidates to provide professional support. Eligibility should be based on competence and proficiency to enhance safety training without academic backgrounds or age constraints.

A valid DGR certification should signify an individual's commitment to aviation safety and risk-based decision-making. The current focus on certifications for audits in India sometimes overlooks the importance of course content and its quality, leading to potential shortcomings in the competence of personnel responsible for handling hazardous materials.

Ensuring a regulated pricing framework is vital to safeguard the quality of DG Training, preventing certification devaluation resulting from uncontrolled price fluctuations. These measures are instrumental in enhancing aviation safety in India, emphasizing competency and comprehensive training.

Unfortunately, as of 25th January 2023, CAR has imposed restrictions barring veterans and experts based on their physics and chemistry subject backgrounds and age.

5. Enhancing Safety Through Comprehensive Dangerous Goods Training

The primary goal of dangerous goods training is to prevent the presence of hidden dangerous items in passengers' check-in and carry-on baggage or on their person. Additionally, it strives to avoid the shipment of undeclared or incorrectly declared dangerous goods in cargo, mail, or COMAT. Training must align with the DGR concept of "**awareness, semi-skilled, and skilled**" to ensure candidates can proficiently execute their job responsibilities."

Adequate training must be provided to all persons involved in air transportation, including security and screening. In addition, postal operators, airport fire and safety, chemical companies, couriers, and e-commerce companies, including personnel involved in multi-transportation systems, must also be adequately trained. Regrettably, India currently lacks clarity and has not yet addressed this process.

6. GHS - Compliant Materials in Air Passenger Baggage:

The Globally Harmonized System (GHS) plays a crucial role in harmonizing the Hazard Communication Standard (HCS) program, particularly under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The government's delay in adopting GHS measures for passenger safety is a cause for concern. GHS facilitates consistent safety protocols by implementing standardized labels, safety data sheets, and comprehensive employee training in properly handling hazardous chemicals.

Most air passenger baggage contains GHS-compliant materials, such as personal care products, batteries, and aerosols. Embracing GHS would enhance safety practices and protect passengers and employees in the aviation sector. India has not adopted this yet.

7. Clarifying Restricted Articles List in AvSec: Addressing Ambiguity with Matchboxes

The Bureau of Civil Aviation's restricted articles list is ambiguous; while pictorial representations show cigarette lighters as prohibited, matchboxes are not explicitly mentioned. More precise guidelines are necessary for uniformity and enhanced safety, especially regarding matchboxes and smoking in aircraft lavatories.

8. Ensuring Safe Handling of Dangerous Goods

Addressing the movement of dangerous goods is crucial. The risks associated with mis-declared or incorrectly declared items, improper packaging, and insufficient documentation are significant and should not be underestimated. It is essential to adhere to international regulations, especially since India adopted the International Chemical Safety Cards (ICSC) in July 2022 to ensure such materials' safe handling and transportation.

9. Inadequate Indian Standards for Dangerous Goods Transportation

The recent guidelines published by the Bureau of Indian Standards in February 2023 and the associated dangerous goods declaration form fall short of meeting aviation industry requirements set forth by ICAO, IATA, and DGCA.

10. Need for Transparency and Corrective Measures

Aviation safety needs immediate attention, lacking published investigations or root cause analyses for incidents or near-misses highlighting the importance of transparent and proactive measures to implement corrective and preventive actions.

11. Empowering Remote Villagers: Enhancing Aviation Safety Awareness

Passenger baggage may contain hazardous items like lithium batteries, perfumes, lighters, or matchboxes, posing potential fire or explosion risks due to in-flight conditions. Indian passengers often lack awareness of baggage regulations and prohibited items, and language barriers with e-tickets can exacerbate the issue. Warning pictograms in English create communication challenges for those who primarily understand only regional languages. Bridging this gap is vital for passenger safety and awareness.

The incidents of the labourer smoking 'Beedi' on the Akasa flight and the Cook's misbehaviour on Air India flights shed light on the awareness of villagers traveling by air.

As the UK civil aviation authority endorsed, airline operators are responsible for informing passengers about restricted items in checked baggage. However, Aircraft Rules 2003 Rule 10.3 is not implemented effectively.

12. Communication Challenges with on-board Passengers

In aviation, a common mistake is flight crews struggling to communicate with illiterate passengers in English. Language barriers, pronunciation problems, and cross-cultural challenges often lead to misunderstandings in crew messages on board. This is particularly concerning for ordinary passengers, like unskilled laborers or individuals from rural villages, who may need assistance understanding instructions.

Even educated passengers may require help with comprehension at times. Effective communication remains vital to ensure passenger safety and comfort during flights. Addressing language barriers and improving communication will benefit all passengers, regardless of their background or educational level. Ensuring clear and accessible communication is essential for a safe and pleasant flying experience.

Strengthening Aviation Safety Culture Through Competency-Based DGR Training

ICAO's commitment to global safety has revolutionized hazardous goods learning with Competency-Based Training and Assessment (CBTA), prioritizing job functions and responsibilities over traditional category-based training for air transportation personnel. This approach implemented worldwide from January 1, 2023, strengthens safety culture and risk management within the aviation industry. It empowers countries to enhance required standards and competencies, enabling them to establish a Control Board aligned with the rigorous ICAO/IATA Technical Instructions for training and certifications.

IATA's CBTA-based DGR training prioritizes practical applications, covering TI (Technical Instructions) requirements and safe dangerous goods handling. It exceeds ICAO's standards, incorporating industry best practices for optimized procedures. This training becomes a vital benchmark for airlines, demonstrating their commitment to passenger safety. Emphasizing operational considerations sets IATA's DGR apart, promoting responsible handling. As a Chicago Convention signatory, India can benefit from IATA's training to elevate aviation safety standards.

To strengthen the Safety Management System (SMS), CBTA training is tailored and differentiated to prevent the transportation of hidden dangerous goods and ensure safe handling. This approach prevents concealed dangerous goods from passengers and accurately declared dangerous goods from cargo, mail, or stores. CBTA approach aims for:

- **Preventing hidden dangerous goods from passengers.**
- **Preventing inaccurately declared dangerous goods from cargo, mail, or stores cargo.**
- **Handling dangerous goods shipments by established regulations.**

Training levels include awareness, semi-skilled, and skilled, equipping individuals with the required knowledge, skills, and competencies for their job functions.

India has been processing to migrate to the CBTA approach; however, this would be possible only through an amendment to the Aircraft (carriage of Dangerous Goods) Rules 2003 and CAR (25th January 2023), establishing the employers' responsibility and employees' accountability.

Government Responsibilities

India aims to align its regulatory framework with ICAO Doc 10147 guidelines, customized to meet specific requirements for air transportation personnel. The national authorities must be responsible for defining standards and competencies, training content, delivery schedules, and monitoring trainees' performance. Collaboration between the government and airlines is crucial to promote competency-based DG training and prioritize aviation safety in India. The government will prioritize Civil Aviation Requirements to differentiate between preventing hidden dangerous goods and handling dangerous goods, ensuring a strong safety culture and comprehensive training for all air transportation personnel.

Airline Responsibilities

Airlines must provide tailored training to personnel following ICAO/IATA guidelines, focusing on specific responsibilities and emergency response capabilities. The training content, duration, and depth should align with the functional requirements outlined in the CAR. Continual evaluation of personnel's knowledge, skills, and competencies is crucial to maintain training and workplace proficiency, and any irregularities in performance must be promptly addressed through appropriate corrective measures. Competency-aligned training, particularly in emergency response tasks, is essential to effectively handle dangerous goods and emergencies, minimizing harm to passengers and crew. By maintaining Training and Compliance Records, employers can demonstrate compliance with regulations and ensure transparency and accountability, ultimately enhancing aviation safety in India.

Advancing Safety Standards in India:

Evidence-based Recommendations for Regulatory Change

1. Empowering Competency-based Dangerous Goods Regulations

India must prioritize implementing a competency-based Dangerous Goods Regulations (DGR) training program to bolster aviation safety, following ICAO Doc 10147 guidelines. Standardizing accreditations, monitoring, and collaboration in handling dangerous goods will minimize risks to public safety and the environment.

Broadening national regulations and reassessing concepts on hazardous materials with standardized methods for competency assessments will strengthen the aviation sector's safety protocols.

It is essential to redefine the Aircraft (Carriage of Dangerous Goods) Rule 2003 and align the Civil Aviation Requirements with ICAO Doc 10147 guidelines for establishing a new safety culture. Comprehensive accountability for all involved in air transportation is vital.

The Aircraft (Carriage of Dangerous Goods) Rules 2003 and Civil Aviation Requirement 2010, ending on 25th January 2023, must be redefined, restructured, and modified to meet the CBTA approach and the current challenges in India:

The Aircraft (Carriage of Dangerous Goods) Rules, 2003,

Rule 1(C) is to be amended to: "To persons operating air transport services to, within, and over India, shippers of dangerous goods, or their agents, including all stakeholders involved in air transportation."

Rule 12 -To be amended to: "All persons involved in air transportation must undergo proper dangerous goods training commensurate with his functional responsibilities."

ICAO CBTA focuses on aviation safety by collaborating with aircraft operators, ground handling providers, and related stakeholders. Employers are responsible for ensuring that airline or airport operations personnel receive proper training and assessment before performing their duties, ensuring competence and adherence to safety standards. The scope of training is extended to reservations, engineering, security, and screening personnel, considering their influence on passenger baggage, cargo, and company mail handling.

Handling dangerous goods requires technical knowledge, skills, and competencies not solely based on physics or chemistry subjects. The worldwide aviation industry actively seeks guidance and support from experienced veterans to design and train the CBTA process. However, India excludes them based on age, as indicated in CAR on January 25, 2023.

Emphasizing prevention and regulation adherence will support the Safety Management System (SMS) for handling dangerous goods.

2. Empowering DG Directorate: Establishing an Independent DG Control Board for India

To ensure the effective implementation of the CBTA approach, DG Directorate is highly recommended to constitute a DG Control Board comprising industry veterans and DG experts with decades of experience.

This Board shall redefine structures, standards, competencies, and assessment benchmarks. It shall be accountable for defining training content and delivery schedules. Written tests, oral exams, case studies, practical exercises, and comprehensive evaluations will set assessment standards. The board will also monitor trainees' performance during training and at work. It will oversee incident reports, enhance safety

training, and shape national priorities for DG handling, significantly when ICAO and IATA restrict the dissemination of addendums and updates to only their members and accredited parties, limiting public access.

3. Strengthening Safety: Enhanced CBTA Training for Handling Dangerous Goods

Implement enhanced CBTA training to prevent hidden dangerous goods, mis-declared or wrongly declared shipments, ensure proper handling, and equip personnel with the necessary knowledge and skills.

4. Passenger Awareness: Prohibited Dangerous Goods on Aircraft

The airline operator (public transport) must prominently alert passengers about the specific types of hazardous materials that are not allowed as checked baggage or carry-on items. This warning should be communicated on every passenger ticket or through other effective methods to ensure that passengers are fully informed and adhere to safety regulations concerning dangerous goods while traveling. This will reduce waiting times, minimize inconveniences, and provide passengers a more enjoyable overall journey.

5. GHS Implementation: Safeguarding Aviation from Hazardous Materials

Implementing GHS (Globally Harmonized System) is essential as it ensures standardized labelling, safety data sheets, and proper employee training, promoting consistent and effective handling of hazardous materials for enhanced safety and protection.

6. Enhancing In-Flight Communication:

To enhance passenger safety, cabin crew announcements on domestic flights in India should include local languages spoken at departure and destination airports, alongside English and Hindi. Thorough training for flight crews is essential to overcome language barriers and ensure clear communication, especially for illiterate or less-educated passengers needing assistance.

7. Addressing Unruly Passenger Behaviours: India's Path to Safer Skies

India should either sign MP-14 under Annex 9 or establish penalties to address the increasing incidents of unruly and disruptive behaviours from passengers and ensure a safer aviation environment. Taking decisive action in either of these ways will help deter disruptive incidents and uphold the integrity of the aviation industry in India.

8. Enhancing Aviation Safety: Surprise Audits and Lithium Battery Handling Standards

- Surprise audits by DGCA at the shippers' level are vital to assess knowledge, competence, and workplace safety. Regulatory checks cover passenger information, hazardous goods shipments, packaging, cushioning, and documentation, ensuring ongoing safety and compliance.
- Develop and enforce specific standards and handling procedures for lithium batteries. The absence of crucial shipment information, such as airwaybill and lithium content, poses a significant aviation safety risk during intense carrier competition.

9. Learning from Incidents: Case Studies for Dangerous Goods Training and Public Awareness

Incidents, accidents, and near-misses should be documented and published as case studies to improve dangerous goods training and public awareness.

10. Promoting Local Language Awareness of Hidden Dangerous Goods at Airports

Airport operators (public transport) should extensively promote awareness of hidden dangerous goods in local languages alongside English and Hindi.

11. Rapid Deployment of 3D Scanners

The speedy implementation of 3D and DGR-certified scanners in all airports will expedite security checks, leading to smoother and more efficient travel experiences for passengers.

12. Inadequate Indian Standards and the Need for Ensuring Safe Handling of Dangerous Goods

- The recent guidelines by the Bureau of Indian Standards and the associated dangerous goods declaration form fall short of meeting aviation industry requirements set forth by ICAO, IATA, and DGCA.
- The Bureau of Civil Aviation's restricted articles list lacks clarity; cigarette lighters and matchboxes are pictorially prohibited, but matchboxes are not mentioned explicitly. More precise guidelines are needed for uniformity and enhanced safety, particularly regarding matchboxes used for smoking in aircraft lavatories.
- Aviation Security's Competency-based Training, focusing on function-specific training (ICAO 10147), should be in harmony with Chapter 8 of the ICAO Aviation Security Manual, and coordination between BCAS and DG Directorate is essential.
- Ensuring the safe movement of dangerous goods is critical, considering the substantial risks posed by mis-declared items, inadequate packaging, and insufficient documentation. India's adoption of the International Chemical Safety Cards (ICSC) is anticipated to contribute to the safe handling of hazardous materials positively.

13. Stakeholders to Enhance Passenger Safety in India's Aviation Industry

The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) should take steps to establish a Consultative Council. This council should include representatives from all relevant stakeholders, including airline users and air passenger associations in India, to improve air safety measures, including the safety of air passengers.

Conclusion

UDAN plays a crucial role in making air travel more affordable and accessible, benefiting even people from rural areas. The Prime Minister's vision for UDAN aims to extend these benefits even to individuals from rural villages, including those with limited literacy. However, there is a need for better information and regulations to cater to the target audience across the 138 airports that handle nearly 4.57 lakhs of passengers daily. Implementing robust safety protocols, aligning with global standards, and enforcing stronger punishments for violations are essential to ensure passenger well-being.

Despite the existence of the Passenger Charter 2019, passenger rights are sometimes overlooked, as seen in the unfortunate incident where around 300 VietJet passengers were stranded for 12 hours at Mumbai airport without necessities, though DGCA regulations mandate proper care for passengers during flight delays.

CAPA India's recent warning highlights the necessity of an independent aviation safety regime akin to the UK CAA. The close call, moving India's aviation safety ranking from 112th to 55th in the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP), underscores the pressing need for enhanced safety measures.

A well-structured monitoring roadmap, including reporting case studies, will enhance aviation safety. Collaboration among regulatory authorities, airlines, and stakeholders is crucial to uphold the highest standards and create a reliable air transport system for all passengers.

Acknowledgments

This document is prepared on behalf of the Airline Users Rights and Grievances Redressal Forum (AIRGRF) by Shri Biji Eapen and his team at Speedwings Aviation Academy, an IATA-approved CBTA DG Training Provider in India with decades of internationally proven experience handling passenger and cargo, narrow and widebody passenger aircraft, including combi and freighter.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to your esteemed organization for providing us with this valuable opportunity to share our research findings and perspectives on the current state of aviation safety and passengers' well-being.

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