

Crew Meals and Hotel Updates



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While I always hope for a year-to-year decrease in the problems your committee has to deal with, the Year 2000 is not shaping up that way. We've had some successes, but they pale in comparison to the problems that are mounting weekly.

I'll first touch on the positive results. As I reported in the last issue, we finally approved the new crew meal menus and you should start seeing them in March. There will be a weekly rotation, so I hope you won't get tired of the meals. This is not a one-time fix. We plan to review the menus and make changes every six months or so, based on what we find on the line and your comments to us.

The hardest part was to get the ball rolling with the Dining and Cabin Services Department. So please let us know what you think of the new meals and what you would like to see added or subtracted from them.

The second part of the crew meal problem deals with Crew Planning and getting the computer program modified to comply with our Contract. I didn't push real hard to get that fixed because of the delay in getting the new menus approved. Having more meals that we would not eat was not my goal. The goal has been to have meals that are acceptable to the crews and provided when contractually required.

I had a meeting with the Crew Planning staff to discuss the problems and to bring in examples of what is going wrong with the program, and what they need to do to comply

with our contract. We covered all the issues, and I feel they understand what needs to be fixed, and why. The next step is to get the time from the SABRE folks to modify the software. This could be a bit tougher as they are dealing with the changes needed to many programs as the A330 is introduced to the fleet. I'll be getting bi-weekly updates as to the progress they are making. Should the process start to bog down, I'll be able to react quickly to keep it moving.

In the meantime, everyone can help us out by reviewing your trip sheets to make sure the meals are being inserted where they should be. Should you find a trip lacking in meals, please forward the pairing number and month to me via e-mail or OF-310 forms. A hard copy of the pairing would be helpful, as I don't have a copy of every trip sheet. By providing the largest amount of data possible, I hope the programmers will be able to get it right the first time. Since the May trips are just about to be published, we will have a few months more of the wrong program to hopefully find all the mistakes. Remember, we are entitled to a crew meal after six hours on duty without a one-hour break between flights. There is no restriction on getting only one crew meal per duty period. Therefore, those 13:50-type duty days may require two crew meals as long as there is not more than a one-hour break between flights.

The final part of the puzzle is the delivery of the crew meals. Each station has different people responsible for this. At some stations Company personnel are responsible for catering, while

others use contract caterers. This will be slightly more difficult for us to get a handle on, but we will work on making sure the meals are delivered in a timely manner. When they are not, again please let us know. We can't work on the problems if you don't let us know about them.

On the hotel front, there are no changes to report. It has become more frustrating trying to get needed hotel changes made. It seems our management is taking an even harder stance on hotel expenses. Even when a change is cost neutral, management still refuses to make it. In cities where we feel a change is needed and costs are higher, they are slower still. It appears that we will have to change our strategy in working to bring about hotel changes. There are many problems out there: your committee

knows it, you know it and our management knows it. But it doesn't seem as though they are going to make a change until we file a grievance. This is not the most efficient way to do business, but it sure looks as though that is going to be the only way to accomplish our goals.

To support this effort, I am again asking you to fill out OF-310 forms whenever you run into problems on the line. I know the perception exists that the forms are ineffective, but I know different. Should we enter the grievance process, a stack of complaints from different crewmembers on a hotel provides us with needed ammunition. A lack of comments due to apathy on a well-known problem hotel weakens our position considerably. This will take a little bit of your time. But if you're willing to spend that

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Watch List

- DTW long**— This hotel had the most complaints for the month with eight. We are month-to-month at this hotel. We have found two suitable alternatives. By the time you read this, a decision should be made or a grievance filed.
- EWR long**— This has been on the list since its birth. The contract is up this spring and we plan to move. We will not approve this hotel again. I hope an alternative hotel will solve most, if not all, of the problems.
- CLE short (Ramada)**—This is a very poor hotel in terms of room product. We have found some space at the Sheraton at the airport. Our only question is: Will it always be enough space?
- IND (Quality Hotel)**—The contract is up. There is more space in town for us, precluding the need for this hotel.
- IND short (Ramada)**—This contract is up. We have the noise problem from FedEx ops during the night especially in the low-rise section. When in the low-rise section we also have room quality problems. The only down side to a change is to lose the ability to walk to the hotel for a short RON. However, we want to see what else is available in the airport area.
- TPA long**— Again we have found space at other hotels without a cost increase with no change made by the Company. This has gone on far too long. Because of this we have to double-check if we can still get into alternative hotels. If we can and no change is made, another grievance will be coming.
- SDF**— If all overnights leave this hotel it may create more problems than it would solve for our crews. We will continue to monitor comments and the local hotel market in hopes something will open up.

I dealt with only 83 OF-310 forms this month, as I had recurrent ground school and a simulator check. Of these, three were positive reports, another three concerned crew meals, two discussed general topics, while the remaining 77 were negative comments.

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time to help your committee, I’m willing to spend the time to take it to the next level. We are working to ensure that the OF-310 collection boxes in each crew base are checked weekly.

Incidental charges

We continue to see an increase in hotels claiming that crewmembers are not paying their incidental charges. Since we normally enjoy the privilege of not having to leave a credit card or cash at the desk when signing in, we are easy marks for the hotel staff to say we’re not paying bills we have incurred. In some cases it is poor work by the hotel staff and in other cases it is our employees not paying their bills. You may want to think about stopping by the desk at checkout to verify that bills haven’t been posted to your room by mistake. This would be especially true in hotels where we don’t have to leave some sort of deposit.

I bring this up because of some incidents we had in YUL at our long hotel. They have pro-

vided us with dates, times and employee numbers of crewmembers who, they claim, have not been paying their incidental charges. Other hotels have made this claim but have been unable to provide documentation. I can ignore the undocumented cases, but the legitimate ones are making it harder for us to maintain the privileges we have enjoyed in all of our hotels. This is particularly true with national hotel chains.

That is it for this month. Please keep some OF-310 forms in your flight bag to fill out so all you have to do is drop them off at the end of the trip. If you help us, we will do our very best to help you.

Have a good overnight!

