

Scheduling News

Steve Smyser (PIT)
Vice Chairman, Central Scheduling Committee

“I am sure that many of you, like me, often feel like we have to rediscover the scheduling rules every time we show up for a trip. Things are changing so fast it is hard to keep up with all the new procedures.”

At the first quarter MEC meeting held in CLT in February 2000, the MEC created the new position of Vice Chairman of the Central Scheduling Committee. At that same meeting, Central Scheduling Committee Chairman Jeff Edwards recommended me to fill this position, and the MEC then approved my appointment. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to those of you I have not yet met, and at the same time briefly update you on some of the work your Central Scheduling Committee has been doing.

I am sure that many of you, like me, often feel like we have to rediscover the scheduling rules every time we show up for a trip. Things are changing so fast that it is hard to keep up with all the new procedures. One day we have R to S transition, and the next day it is gone. One day we have personal trip drops, and the next we don't. These frustrations were further exacerbated with the December 12, 1999, implementation of the new Rest Rules mandated by the FAA, which I will address later.

Ever since the ratification of the Contract, which gave us this new scheduling system, your Central Scheduling Committee, along with the Scheduling Implementation Task Force, has been attempting to find ways to improve the system to the benefit of our pilots. Many of the problems we discovered turned out to be Contract interpretation problems where management believes one thing, and ALPA believes another. We created a list of these differences which, after much deliberation, we called “Open

Scheduling Items.” Many of the items on this list were then added to the MEC's “Global List,” which is a list of major pilot problems the MEC has targeted for special emphasis to solve. There are 50 items currently on this list, and only 18 are considered closed. Four of these closed items were just agreed to in May. We will continue meeting with management and attempt to resolve the remaining scheduling issues, as well as any new issues that arise.

One of the main impediments to solving the many scheduling issues is the corporate culture in existence at our Company today. As you might remember from the December 1999 *US AIRWAVES* article by Doug Mowery, pilots are now required to wear a “visitor” badge when entering our Operations Control Center (OCC). Mr. Michael Scheeringa, former VP of Operations-Planning, put this policy in place. I find it interesting that you do not need a “visitor” badge to see Messrs. Wolf and Gangwal, but you do need one to get into this area.

To get your visitor badge you need to get into the building, right? In order to get into the building, you now must have a Honeywell card to open the building door or have the guard inside buzz you in. The other day we had our weekly scheduling meeting, and when I arrived at the building, the guard was nowhere to be found. Central Scheduling Committee Chairman Jeff Edwards and I requested Honeywell cards for the two of us and also for the Line Building Committee. They often work late hours, and no guard is present to let them in.

Mr. Scheeringa had said no. Once you do find a guard to let you in, you still need a Honeywell card to let you into the area where the schedulers, supervisors, duty managers, and dispatchers work. There is no guard at this door.

The *coup d'état* to this new corporate culture, and one that will greatly lengthen the time to any meaningful solutions (assuming management wants them), is that ALPA was informed that Mr. Scheeringa decreed that all ALPA phone calls or requests for information to personnel in this department regarding the Contract (And what scheduling question doesn't?) must be referred to Labor Relations to provide an answer or return the call. The problem is that the Labor Relations personnel may not be the experts in this field. They certainly are not experts on the implementation problems we often face. This policy also means that we must wait days, weeks, or maybe months before getting solutions or even responses.

This corporate culture must change. The Central Scheduling Committee has spent years attempting to tear down the walls between the schedulers and the pilots. We have been trying to improve the communications and relationships between the two groups. When we started this new scheduling system, several committee members worked in OCC, side by side, with the schedulers answering questions from the schedulers as well as the pilots. ALPA and the Company jointly made the scheduling flow diagrams you have today, and the same flow chart was issued to both the pilots and schedulers. This way, we both were working from the same information and could hopefully work together to arrive at a solution. All of this progress deteriorated over the many months Mr. Scheeringa ran the department. This is not good for management or the pilots, and it is a negative way to conduct business. I hope progress will resume now that Mr. Scheeringa is no longer in charge. He was removed as Vice President, Operations Planning, and reassigned as Vice President, Customer Service-North. We think this is a good sign for the scheduling area, and we wish him well in his new position.

Let me switch gears here and give you some good news. During the second week of May, we met with management and agreed upon a better way to implement the new Rest Rules mandated by the FAA. These changes are supposed to take place no later than June 1, 2000. The Contract states that a Short Call pilot who is scheduled for a flight shall not be subject to displacement

for a period of 12 hours prior to scheduled departure, except with his/her consent. This 12-hour period may now be used as the pilot's Protected Time (PT) for the purpose of meeting the rest rule requirement. This means that an S Reserve will no longer be denied a trip from Future Scheduling for not having an appropriately scheduled PT. Additionally, an R Reserve may, at pilot option, use the 10:15 in domicile duty break, which you receive at the completion of a trip, as his/her PT. This allows the pilot to volunteer for a less than 9-hour call out. We have also reached an agreement in principle with the Company and are working out the details, which will provide for some R Reserves to volunteer for PTs, and which will in turn allow them to bid for Short Call trips.

The other good news is that management has agreed to our interpretation of the way LOA 78 was to be implemented. Effective June 1, 2000, all Reserve pilots may volunteer to fly into a day off in order to complete a trip. The Company is currently allowing Future Scheduling to handle these requests. Starting June 1, Daily Scheduling will handle these requests as well. In the Daily scenario, a pilot must call the scheduler and indicate his/her desire to fly into a day off. VLA (Vacation Line Adjustment) for Secondary Lineholders will be available starting with the July 2000 bid month. Management has also rescinded its recently imposed restriction on Voluntary Pilot Substitution on the last active leg of a trip if the last leg is a deadhead. A few weeks ago, management notified ALPA that a pilot would have to originate a trip prior to being able to utilize this part of LOA 78. ALPA vehemently objected, and management has now dropped this requirement. It has taken far too long, but with these changes, LOA 78 will be satisfactorily implemented.

We have also requested nine Sabre changes to the CATCREW screens. The first priority was to put PTs into Option 27. The other changes will help pilots get a better and more accurate picture of available coverage. Management has promised us a timeline for completion of these requests, and they will consider increasing the priority given to these requests. This is important because many of these CATCREW enhancements have been on request for *over a year*. We are attempting to set up more meetings with management to get the rest of our Open Scheduling Items resolved, and we will let you know the results of these meetings as soon as we know.

“ During the second week of May, we met with management and agreed upon a better way to implement the new Rest Rules mandated by the FAA. ”



We have recently created another new position on the Central Scheduling Committee, Reserve Specialist, which I feel will be valuable to the pilot group. Jed Thomas (PIT) has been appointed to this position, and he hit the road running, enthusiastically studying new ways to improve the life of our Reserve pilots. Jed is an important asset to the committee. We are also planning to add an International Specialist to the committee.

Several new people have joined the committee, so please take the time to look at the MEC Directory (“gray sheets”) in the *US AIRWAVES* and see who your base committee member is.

These people are the local experts who are most familiar with scheduling issues. If they don't know the answer to your question, they will know where to find it. They are dedicated pilots who spend a lot of time keeping abreast of scheduling issues and will work hard to help you with your scheduling problems.

Until next time we will continue to wear our “badges” with honor and keep up the battle to protect our Contract and our rights.

