

# On-Time Performance and Task Prioritization



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Over the past couple of years, we have all been subjected to various scenarios in the simulator as part of the recurrent LOFT program. The success in the outcome of the emergency aspect of the LOFT is dependent on how well we interact as crewmembers and how well we prioritize our tasks during the event. Obviously, this is also true during any emergency we might experience out on the line.

Task prioritization is also something that is important during each flight. We get a lot of guidance on this topic. There are references to it in the Flight Operations Manual and in our airplane flight manuals. Even our normal checklists can be thought of as prioritization lists. Occasionally we receive special bulletins from the Company detailing what they believe is most important in our everyday line operations.

We also receive a lot of material regarding the importance of on-time performance. Since this is a key statistic that the Department of Transportation and the traveling public uses to measure the quality of an airline, airline managements put a high premium on emphasizing on-time performance to their employees. But where does on-time performance fall on the priority list for us as airline pilots? No one can dispute its importance. Subtly, it is even part of the ALPA motto, "Schedule with Safety." But should it be number one on our list?

While each of us undoubtedly has his or her own ideas about the order of importance in the tasks we perform during our line operations, here's a prioritization list to be considered:

1. Safety—this should be the foundation of every action we take as an airline pilot.

2. Adherence to policies and procedures—these have been carefully developed and provided to us by the Company and the FAA. They ensure a safe operating environment, provide efficiencies in our operation, and when followed precisely, go a long way to keep us out of trouble with the Company and the FAA.
3. Passenger comfort—this keeps our customers coming back. Whether it's the temperature of the cabin, the smoothness of the ride, or the PA announcements we make, each gets noticed and is the impact that we as pilots have on the product our management is selling to the traveling public.
4. On-time performance

There are those in management who may not agree with this priority list. However, I'll submit that a flight that departs and arrives on time, with a crew that compromises safety, that cuts corners in their procedures and checklists, with a cabin that is uncomfortably hot during the boarding process, may help in the on-time performance statistic. However, that does little for the long term survivability of that airline. Placing a higher priority on the first three will go a long way in providing better on-time performance in the long run.

## LAHSO update (one more time)

If you ever think that we as pilots don't have a voice or the ability to make a difference in rules we operate under, just stop for a moment and think about what we were able to do with Land and Hold Short Operations (LAHSO). As

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a pilot group, we came together in recognizing the safety shortcomings, collectively said “NO” to a procedure that was unsafe by refusing to participate, and in the end the FAA agreed. As a result, we now have an FAA order that will implement LAHSO in a safe manner while meeting all the requirements on which ALPA insisted.

This could not have been done without the support of each of you. The statistics showed that better than 75 percent of the airline pilots in the U.S. participated in the LAHSO moratorium. Congratulations to each of you for placing safety at a higher priority than capacity enhancement.

### **My take-off alternate is where?**

Recently, I was contacted by a crew that was departing DEN during foggy conditions and was issued a takeoff alternate of Grand Junction (GJT). GJT looked good on paper, in that the weather was excellent and it's only 200 nm from DEN to GJT. What is not so good is that

the MEA from DEN to GJT is 16,500 feet! The Airbus is a wonderful airplane, but can it climb UP to 16,500 feet at gross weight on a single engine?

In discussions with Ops Engineering, it was discovered that dispatch is not provided with any performance data to ensure that an MEA can be met on a single engine. For most of our route structure this is not a factor, but there are cases where it is. Ops Engineering is in the process of working on this data for those segments where it's applicable. In the meantime, if you're operating in an area where mountainous terrain is present, and you are issued a takeoff alternate, it's a good idea to check your MEAs just to be sure.

Feel free to contact any member of your Central Air Safety Committee with any questions, comments or concerns you may have.

