

CONFERENCE ON EYJAFJALLAJÖKULL AND AVIATION

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SECOND CONFERENCE SESSION

ATA Remarks by Vice President, Operation and Safety Tom Hendricks at the Atlantic Conference on Eyjafjallajökull and Aviation

Mr. Tom Hendricks, ATA Vice President - Operations and Safety

Good morning.

On behalf of the 16 member airlines of the Air Transport Association of America, I offer my thanks to the Keilir Aviation Academy, the Icelandic Transport and Civil Aviation Authorities and the Association of European Airlines for their roles in hosting this very important international forum. The ATA welcomes the opportunity to provide U.S. airline perspective on the impact to our industry and offer suggestions on how to improve the international response to similar events that will certainly arise in the future.

As other speakers have noted, the impact of the volcanic eruption of April 14 and beyond proved to be highly disruptive to passenger and cargo movement, operational control and decision-making, and commercial interests. The breadth of the impact stretched far beyond the Atlantic. With large numbers of crew and aircraft resources frozen in Europe and North America, airlines rushed to reallocate remaining resources to cover flying in other regions. The disruption to planned maintenance activities, crew training events, and to our passengers' travel plans all took a deep toll on airline franchises and individuals across the globe.

As the scope of the eruption became apparent, initial responses by European authorities proved confusing to global operators. While admittedly experiencing an ambiguous risk and crisis-management situation, guidance provided from European regulators and navigation service providers resulted in numerous air turn-backs, cancellations after gate departure and other irregular operations. Here is a perspective of just one major U.S. trans-Atlantic operator.

“The eruption of Mount Eyjafjallajökull resulted in European governments closing two-thirds of European airspace. Airlines worldwide were forced to cancel flights to and from the region. During a six-day period, IATA estimated that the disruption cost global airlines more than \$1.7 billion in lost revenue. For a three-day period, when disruptions were greatest, lost revenues reached \$400 million per day and affected 1.2 million passengers per day. During the period, one airline cancelled more than 470 trans-Atlantic flights.

Airlines worldwide have voiced their opposition as to how the European Air Navigation Service Providers handled this event. Airspace was closed, forcing massive cancellations and air turn-backs over the North Atlantic to the United States, without allowing the operators any input into the decision making and, more importantly, not allowing operators to make decisions based on the traditional worldwide standard of placing the responsibility for the safety of the operation on the aircraft operator. At no time, with all the volcanoes erupting all over the world, have such drastic measures been taken.”

Large U.S. international airlines have a strong history of safely operating in similar environments around the globe. Volcanic eruptions are not unusual. At times, near-daily events occur in Alaska, the Caribbean, Latin America or Asia that cause potential disruptions to flight operations. The common global model treats volcanic activity as major weather events, and the burden of managing the risk falls to individual operators and their regulators. The large U.S. airline model of sophisticated systems of operational control backed by the requirement for worldwide rapid and reliable communication between airline operations centers and the cockpit facilitates a collaborative decision-making philosophy. Further, shared operational control between captains and licensed dispatchers helps to focus both parties on all aspects of managing risk on a network and individual flight basis.

What have we learned from this event? First, U.S. airlines expended significant effort over several weeks when the volcano continued to erupt (14 April to late May). Initially, the airline industry was provided with volcanic-ash advisory information that outlined an area that included concentrations as small as 10,000 times lower than the concentration estimated to cause catastrophic engine failure. By 20 April, a second higher threshold was added of 1,000 times less concentration than engine failure. Finally, by 18 May, a third threshold was added. Increased definition of the ash hazard was made during the continuing eruption but more progress is necessary and is continuing.

Through extensive dialogue, consultation and experience with events such as this, the worldwide aviation community is rapidly enhancing the capability to more effectively cope with future events. The ICAO Volcanic Ash Task Force and activities of the European Crisis Coordination Cell represent two efforts underway that will yield tangible benefits in both the short and long terms. Further, this event clearly shows the need to accelerate single European sky. From the U.S. perspective, we stand ready to join our European aviation partners in implementing solutions that promote the safe conduct of commercial Air operations in environments such as those affected by the Eyjafjallajokull eruption. The keys for future success are grounded in communications, coordination, collaborative decision-making, airspace modernization, and recognition of the shared interests of all parties in operating safely and reliably. The U.S. industry stands ready to assist and provide resources to help in that common goal.

Thank you very much.

ATA's Hendricks Talks Lessons Learned From Eyjafjallajökull Volcano

Thu, 16 Sep '10



Air Transport Association's Tom Hendricks/FILE PHOTO

Communications, Coordination, Collaboration and Recognition of Shared Interests Critical for Future Crisis Management

Speaking at the Atlantic Conference on Eyjafjallajökull and Aviation in Keflavik, Iceland this week, Tom Hendricks, Air Transport Association Vice President, Operations and Safety talked "lessons learned" from the April 14th eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull Volcano. The lengthy eruption proved to be highly disruptive to passenger and cargo movement, operational control and decision-making, and commercial interests, noted Hendricks. He also said, the breadth of the impact stretched far beyond the Atlantic. With large numbers of crew and aircraft resources frozen in both Europe and North America, Hendricks pointed out airlines rushed to reallocate remaining resources to cover flying in other regions. "The disruption to planned maintenance activities, crew training events and to our passengers' travel plans took a deep toll on airline franchises and individuals across the globe," he said. Hendricks said that as the scope of the eruption became apparent, initial responses by European authorities "proved confusing to U.S. operators." While admittedly experiencing an ambiguous risk and crisis management situation, he noted that guidance from European regulators and navigation service providers resulted in numerous air turn-backs, cancellations after gate departure and other irregular operations. Hendricks quotes one major U.S. trans-Atlantic operator to illustrate his point: "The eruption of mount Eyjafjallajökull resulted in the European governments closing two-thirds of European airspace. Airlines worldwide were forced to cancel flights to and from the region. During a six-day period, IATA estimated that the disruption cost global airlines more than \$1.7 billion in lost revenue. For a three-day period, when disruptions were greatest, lost revenues reached \$400 million per day and affected 1.2 million passengers per day. During the period, one airline canceled more than 470 transatlantic flights. Airlines worldwide have voiced their opposition as to how the European air navigation service providers handled this event. Airspace was closed forcing massive cancellations and air turn-backs over the north Atlantic to the United States, without allowing the operators any input into the decision making and more importantly, not allowing operators to make decisions based on the traditional worldwide standard of placing the responsibility for the safety of the operation on the aircraft operator. At no time, with all the volcanoes erupting all over the world, have such drastic measures been taken."

Hendricks said large U.S. international airlines have a strong history of operating safely in similar environments around the globe and that volcanic eruptions are not unusual. At times, he said, near-daily events occur in Alaska, the Caribbean, Latin America or Asia that cause potential disruptions to flight operations. The U.S. model treats volcanic activity as major weather events and the burden of managing the risk falls to individual operators and their regulators. The large international U.S. airline model of sophisticated systems of operational control backed by the requirement for worldwide rapid and reliable communication between

airline operations centers and the cockpit facilitates a collaborative decision-making philosophy. Further, shared operational control between captains and licensed dispatchers helps to focus both parties on all aspects of managing risk on a network and individual flight basis.

Hendricks asked, "What have we learned from this event?"

"First, U.S. airlines expended significant effort over several weeks when the volcano continued to erupt (14 April to late May)," he said. "Initially, the airline industry was provided with volcanic-ash advisory information that outlined an area which included concentrations as small as 10,000 times lower than the concentration estimated to cause catastrophic engine failure. By 20 April, a second higher threshold was added of 1000 times less concentration than engine failure. Finally by 18 May, a third threshold was added. Increased definition of the ash hazard was made during the continuing eruption but more progress is necessary and is continuing."

Concluding his remarks, Hendricks emphasized that only through extensive dialog, consultations and experience with events such as this, the worldwide aviation community is rapidly enhancing the capability to more effectively cope with future events. "The ICAO volcanic ash task force and activities of the European crisis-coordination cell represent two efforts underway that will yield tangible benefits in both the short and long term," he said. "From the U.S. perspective, we stand ready to join our European aviation partners in implementing solutions that promote the safe conduct of commercial air operations in environments such as those affected by the Eyjafjallajökull eruption. The keys for future success are grounded in communications, coordination, collaboration and recognition of the shared interests of all parties in operating safely and reliably. The U.S. industry stands ready to assist and provide resources to help in that common goal."

The International Conference was organized by Keilir Aviation Academy in cooperation with the President of Iceland, the Icelandic Ministry of Transport, the Civil Aviation Administration, ISAVIA, the Icelandic Meteorological Office, Institute of Earth Sciences at University of Iceland, Icelandair, ICAO, IATA, ATA, AEA, the US Embassy in Iceland and the Russian Federations Embassy in Iceland