



April 20, 2008

Grant Stinchfield  
NBC5 News  
Dallas, TX

Dear Mr. Stinchfield:

I'm writing to you today in regards to your report on "**Pilots claim airliners forced to fly with low fuel**, Cost-cutting measures create serious risk for fliers, flight crews complain". I feel that you haven't adequately explained to the flying public and your readers the reality of the regulations that are in place to prevent unsafe operations. Let me start by introducing our organization and myself. I am the President of the Airline Dispatchers Federation, and a licensed working dispatcher. The ADF is an all volunteer non labor organization (all working dispatchers), working as an advocate for the dispatch profession. The Airline Dispatchers Federation is the only national organization representing the professional interests of the dispatch profession. ADF's constituency is comprised of licensed aircraft dispatchers and operational control professionals from every U.S. airline, government agencies and aerospace companies.

We understand that you obtained your information from filed ASAP reports. The ASAP program is one of value that allows licensed airmen to file safety reports, where the FAA along with NASA can follow statistical and trend information. We can file an ASAP on anything, i.e. fuel loads to bad crew meals. I believe the ASAP reports used in your article were filed by individuals who's **personal comfort level** of fuel were comprised, **not the regulatory fuel requirements. I assure you that safety has never been compromised on any flight that an aircraft dispatcher has worked.** In fact Aircraft Dispatchers licensing and requirement was enacted by the Federal Government in 1938 following a series of air tragedies. Congress realized the planning and surveillance were necessary to safe flight, ruled standards of competency must be established for the people who control the nation's air carriers.

The FAA has a very conservative regulatory system called the Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR). Some of these regulations were enacted during a period when we flew in turbo prop passenger aircraft, with no timely information as we have today. An example is the requirement to carry a destination alternate airport. Federal Aviation Regulation 121.619 states that 1 hour before and 1 hour after the estimated time of arrival at the destination airport if the ceilings are below 2000ft and the visibility is below 3 statute miles we must list a legal alternate. Today's modern aircraft, crew training, airport navigational aids, and communication capabilities, most flights can land at the destination

with an average of 200ft ceilings and ½ mile visibility. Some flights are even capable of landing to lower minima.

Part of your article said “pilots have the final say on how much fuel they take on board, but they say that when they question the fuel levels suggested in their flight plans, their judgment is frequently challenged.” Actually FAR 121.533 states that The pilot in command and the Dispatcher are jointly responsible for the pre-flight planning, delay, and dispatch release of a flight. If a Captain was able to make a unilateral decision of adding 20,000lbs of fuel, we would have other implications that are safety critical. Examples of where adding the extra fuel (weight) would have other implications are take off and landing weights, this could place us in a position that is now overweight for the runway. The aircrafts ability to climb to avoid obstacles or en route weather is a few areas that are affected when we add fuel without consideration.

The term “minimum fuel” is just an advisory to the Air Traffic Controller that the flight’s fuel situation can not accept any undue delay in reaching its destination. This is NOT an emergency and does not require any priority from ATC.

The FAA clearly spells out the minimum amount of fuel that needs to be boarded on a flight. The Dispatcher and Captain must agree that there is a safe and legal amount of fuel onboard for the given flight. Passenger Safety is never compromised. A flight has numerous adequate airports over the contiguous USA to divert to for fuel should unforeseen delays and reroutes occur. A diversion in of itself is an inconvenience to the passenger and not a safety issue.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions about the Aircraft Dispatcher’s role. The Airline Dispatchers Federation can provide you with detailed and accurate information regarding the flight dispatcher for any future stories. **Safety of Flight is always our number one priority.**

Sincerely,

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