

AIRLINE RECORDS...WHEN AN AIRLINER FLIES A TREE MUST DIE

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Every flight has a certain amount of paperwork that is required of a scheduled airline 121 operation. This chapter is a generic and brief sketch that explains a small portion of the paper trail created when an airliner is scheduled to fly.

Reservations sell tickets. Their computers will have names and data related to every passenger ticket sold for any particular flight. As a minimum the reservation will have name and address of the purchaser, It probably has credit card information as well. There may in fact be a seat assignment made. Method of payment will be recorded. An address and telephone contact is usual.

If the person belongs to a frequent flyer situation that too is usually recorded. The computer internally notices if the flight is one way or return flight. If the flight is to be International a Passport number is obtained and recorded as well as exact spelling of name as shown on Passport.

Most airlines now have computers that allow an email check 24 hours in advance. This computer can issue and sent email boarding passes . This issues a specific seat reservation or seating listing A B or C with priority numbers. At the airport or through a computer baggage check tags issue. The numbers and bar codes are recorded and each individual bag is coded and can be tracked by scanner and computers. A computer data does exist to track that bags journey and handling.

When the passenger actually shows up at the aircraft the ticket is scanned and a computer generated passenger list is completed as to who is actually aboard the aircraft. Flights with reserved seating will show passengers seats as well. It is very often the case that there are no shows and reconciliation takes place before the aircraft is allowed to move. This is for two reasons. Security and final weight and balance. Since 9/11 domestically and before that Internationally no aircraft can move with the passenger count being disparate from checked luggage. In short no checked luggage will be carried unless a passenger owner of that luggage is actually aboard the aircraft.

Of course there are times when lost luggage is re routed to catch up to a passenger that actually flew. What security does not allow to happen is a passenger checks bags at ticket counter or curbside for a specific flight and then no shows the aircraft departure. If this occurs a delay is taken and that checked baggage is not flown until the passenger actually flies. Computer records of such transactions do exist

Other records

Flight Dispatch Records.

Each and every flight conducted by a `121 operators is dispatched professionally. The dispatchers are responsible for seeing that the aircraft is loaded correctly, That it carries adequate minimum fuel to fly the flight plan in weather conditions predicted and existing for the route of flight.

Advance Flight Plan

The dispatchers create a flight plan well in advance of departure time. Typically the flight plan is posted on a computer where the flight crew can see it well in advance. Weight is predicted and fuel loads ascertained and fueling is ordered. Weather along route of flight is forecast. Company paperwork is shown on the company computer in advance of pushback. This advance planning can be retrieved.

Information may include but not be limited to.

- Route of flight
- Altitudes of flight
- Airspeed
- Wind conditions
- Time of flight
- Fuel load/burn
- Maintenance imposed restrictions, if any
- Jump seat rider/riders if scheduled.
- Alternate fields and route if required
- Weather current and forecast
- Notams and Airmets and Pireps,
- Security briefing -special- if needed
 - Law enforcement briefing LEO on board
 - Carrying of prisoners
 - Carrying of INS persons
- Medical Special handling of human parts

Final Flight Plan and Dispatch records.

Just before pushback the aircraft is delivered its final pushback releases. Some airlines receive the final release by computer and the Captain actually signs the release by computer. Other airlines deliver paperwork and retrieve signed release. The final paperwork will consist of a final flight plan to be flown. Final passenger load, final fuel load and distribution, final actual and forecast weather in route and destination, notams, pireps, and security briefing.

The paperwork may compute actual take off rotation speeds, compute trim

settings and dictate flap settings. If there are aircraft maintenance restrictions such restrictions may be noted. You can get all of this through discovery

Utilization of the dispatch records:

The Captain as a minimum is required to check the flight plan against flight plan the crew loaded into the FMS navigation and performance pages. If the final work differs the captain is responsible to update FMS with current data.

Some airlines simply email the data directly to the FMS and this data loads remotely. Others have the flight crew actually load all flight plan data. Regardless if the got it loaded remotely or loaded it themselves, before flying the flight crew is required to check the data as being accurate and properly entered.

All FMS have non volatile memories and post accident retrievals can produce fruitful data. Dispatch keeps and stores its work products and these can be discovered. Dispatch work is conducted by a dispatcher whose signature is also on file.

Records obtained in flight:

Many aircraft have the equivalent of onboard fax machines and /or onboard email capabilities. While airborne the aircraft remains in constant radio touch with the company dispatch office. The aircraft makes routine position reports. This office while airborne functions as dispatch, patches to meteorology, patches to maintenance, to security, to medical, to FBI/TSA and elsewhere. Any actual messages transmitted via email, fax or verbally are kept. They can be discovered through legal processing.

Aircraft Maintenance Logbook and other records:

Each aircraft comes with a maintenance Logbook. The book generally consists of a maintenance write up sheet “gripe sheet” with a column devoted to maintenance gripes and an adjacent write off column to show what maintenance action has been completed. The page is a tear out with either press through or carbon copy. One sheet is torn for every airport with maintenance shop. Each page is returned to a company computer while the book with equivalent pages flies with the aircraft. Discovery of maintenance computers can find all maintenance performed on an aircraft.

The company tracks records for every aircraft in the fleet. In addition, many major components of aircraft are assigned to an aircraft airframe when first delivered. Most of these components are removable, inspect able, repairable or replaceable with other identical or improved version components.

Many such components have service requirements different from the airframe and so each such part is tracked by Part and service number. These records are meticulously kept by responsible airlines for both safety reasons and to show compliance with FAA required maintenance procedures. These component records are discoverable. The most common item that is routinely removed and replaced are the Jet engines. These almost never remain on the same jet aircraft over an entire airframe life.

Aircraft Minimum Equipment Lists:

The aircraft also carries a Minimum Equipment List Book. This book can be discovered. It shows what aircraft equipment can fail and the ability of the aircraft to fly with or without passengers. The book lists all discrepancies and whether the aircraft can be dispatched with and any restrictions or performance penalties to be computed and used. Generally, the MEL book contains post card size gummed labels as well as a postage stamp gummed label. If an MEL is used, the gummed maintenance label attached to the aircraft logbook and the postage stamp placed near or on the failed part. Company Maintenance is informed and the maintenance computer updated to reflect an MEL list item is currently in effect on a specific aircraft.

Scheduled Maintenance records

Depending on the airline, each aircraft is maintained on a scheduled maintenance program approved by the FAA. Major maintenance periods are scheduled, conducted and recorded. All such maintenance records and documents can be discovered.

Contract Maintenance , At many airports the maintenance done on an aircraft may be provided by a company other than the operator. This maintenance is contracted for.

Fueling records:

Every aircraft is usually fueled at every stop. Sometimes an airliner may tanker fuel through some stops but this is unusual. Whether the aircraft is fueled by its own fuelers with company owned fuel or if it is purchased there will be records maintained of the fuel source and the amount purchased. After accidents, it is usual that the fuel source may be tested by the investigating entity. Fueling records can be discovered.

Typical Pilot Crew and Employee Records:

Personnel and Human Resources records:

An airline company keeps records for its crewmembers in perhaps two, three and even four locations. The personnel office -human Resources will hold the employees personnel records. This will include employee questionnaires, references,

testing, pre hiring medical examinations results, investigative and background reports. Often thereafter pages are added with good and bad letters, reprimands and discipline, if any. Promotions are shown as are vacation days taken and earned.

Flight training records

The training department keeps FTRs. They will maintain a listing and records for all ground schools, all initial schools, all recurrent schools, all special schools, All testing and all syllabus sheets should be kept for each school attended. Grades and failure re flies are shown with respect to poor performances or extra training periods. Paperwork issued by training department to comply with FAA requirements is also usually kept in the pilots' flight training records. Some airlines keep extensive training records on pilots' daily progress while in training and destroy it when a completion is accomplished. The airline destroying such daily records usually suggests that daily progress is reserved by simulator instructors should the next session be conducted by a different instructor. This allows a new instructor to efficiently plan the next simulator period to correct problems and deficient performances.

The Chief - Chief Pilot's office and the Base -Chief pilot's office records,

The local chief pilots' office usually keeps a folder on all pilots assigned to his base. These records will show his regency on equipments being flown. The chief pilot combined with the base scheduler will schedule required training. If any disciplinary actions or allegations arise concerning a local pilot, records of such transgression is kept both locally and at the Chief Pilots office at company headquarters. The base chief pilots folders on pilots assigned to the base are similar to, but not as extensive as either the pilots' full training or employee folders. In addition warnings, minor disciplines and minor flight crew counseling may never be serious enough to be recorded anywhere except at a local chief pilots office.

The FAA requires medical certification of pilots. Records of such completion are maintained in the Chief Pilots file concerning pilot qualifications and regency. The file usually only consists of a photocopy of the ticket that the pilot carries in his billfold. A first officer must take a flight physical on a yearly basis and the Captain must have a flight physical every 6 months. The pilot's FAA physical can be discovered from the FAA at its Aero Medical Records Center at Oklahoma City

Company Pay records

Pilot pay is computed either on a trip flown, an hours flown or on a telephone stand by rates. The company keeps perfect records of every minute a pilot works. These work records show up as daily flight schedule, and pay sheet computations. The company usually provides and tracks a pilots work month both by schedule flown and by money paid for work accomplished. These records also usually include hotels and expense payments.

Pilot Logbooks:

Often a pilot will also keep a bound logbook that shows flights and flight times. In fact FAR requires personnel to keep such a logbook, at least to document minimal time required for next higher certificates as well as to show currency and regency.

PILOT UNION CONTRACT PROVISIONS:

Often the Union has contracted for paperwork protection provisions that suggest that the company can keep no disciplinary records surreptitiously. Often if such documents exist in violation of the contract, they are hidden and cannot be disclosed in pilot discipline actions. Many airlines violate the union rules and do keep such documentation. It may be discovered.

Medical records

Often a flight crewmember will use an FAA approved aero medical examiner for his flight physical and will use family doctors for other problems. The local examiner keeps a copy of the exam, as does Oklahoma City. If there has been a medical problem, the FAA has all records and expert materials having to do with the case handling.

Many times a flight crewman may have had medical problems or visits to Drs and other than the Aero examiner. Some companies have medical experts who may examine flight crew for company purposes. These records can be obtained through discovery methods. In addition, the pilots union has specialists who help pilots return to flight status.

Special medical conditions and records:

Airlines have a very successful alcohol rehabilitation program. These records are handled very discreetly and can be obtained through normal discovery or court order.

Base crew scheduling office and/or a crew scheduling computer:

...will have pilots status as to availability to fly. They will have schools scheduled, medical exam status, regency status, currency status, sickness status, disability status, Union leave status, day leave of absence status, standby priority status, schooling status, recurrent status, Authorized leave, Vacation status, flight location if currently flying, Hotels stays, limousine numbers, and more. Many of these records change by the minute. Often they can be reconstructed. . . .

The Company Standard Policy Manual:

This large book suggests employee standard operating procedures. It is often several volumes large. It suggests how an airline operates and how an employee should conduct himself while performing his job or while on a job site or anywhere he is in uniform. The book generally is a book that tells an employee exactly how the company operates, what its rules and procedures are. Chapters are devoted to Pay and benefits, Insurance programs, Flight, pass privileges, Vacation, and Leave policy

and more. It is in any format the company-operating manual to tell an employee his job expectations and benefits. Each division within the company then has added operating rules and procedures.

CAPTAINS POLICY MANUAL:

Generally speaking when a pilot is promoted to Captain he is given a short school -often nicknamed Captains school or Charm school. It is at this school the new Captain is congratulated and introduced to matters a pilot has not previously considered. It introduces the pilot to the responsibility undertaken when sitting in the left seat. It suggests a new degree of leadership that exceeds simply manipulating controls in a standard and safe manner. Such a school introduces the Captain to the company's expectations concerning the safe conduct of the overall operation of the flight. It makes the captain aware of the passenger aspects, the maintenance aspects, the security aspects and the company expectations for each flight.

The Captain then typically is provided a small loose-leaf notebook called a policy Manual that covers every imaginable flight operational aspect of most imaginable flight anomalies and conditions. There are suggested company approved manners to handle every such aspect. The book begins and ends with a statement. This book is a suggested policy. The Captain has ultimate authority and responsibility to deviate as deemed appropriate to conduct the flight safely. As an example it may include

1. Hi Jack procedures
2. Flight Deviation to unscheduled landings
3. Injured passenger handling
4. Unruly passengers
5. Authorizing complimentary services
6. Trip Reporting forms and requirements for using such
7. Company required reports
8. Flight crew illness, incapacitation or problems
9. Using airport medical, police or federal law enforcement.
10. Flight crew coordination between flight deck and cabin.
11. Required special written post flight reports are discussed.
12. Injured passengers should be reported to company and reports filed quickly
13. ...and Much, much more

The book will suggest when and to whom written reports are to be submitted. Such reports should be discoverable. Some go only top base chief pilot. Others have more significant routing requirements

SENIOR FLIGHT ATTENDANT POLICY MANUAL:

The senior flight attendants are given a school and also slightly more pay to accept the responsibility of Flight oversight as Flight attendant in charge. The policy manual suggests company approved and required handling in a myriad of situations.

1. Hi Jack procedures

2. Security procedures
3. LEO procedures
4. Flight Deviation to unscheduled landings
5. Injured passenger handling
6. Unruly passengers
7. Authorizing complimentary services
8. Trip Reporting forms and requirements for using such
9. Company required reports
10. Direct coordination with Captain concerning cabin problems.
11. Flight crew illness, incapacitation or problems
12. Using airport medical, police or federal law enforcement.
13. Flight crew coordination between flight deck and cabin.
14. Injured passengers should be reported to company and reports filed quickly often there are witness forms circulated to passengers who witnessed the incident.
15. Required special written post flight reports to be discussed.
16. ...and Much, much more.

The book will suggest when and to whom written reports are to be submitted. Such reports should be discoverable. Some go only top base chief flight attendants office. pilot. Others have more significant routing requirements.

Reports required by Policy.

The flight discrepancy reports filled out, routed to appropriate persons in accordance with the company procedures and policy manual, and duplicated in Flight Attendant and Captains policy dictate. Whenever on board medical including birth or death, occurs and medical attention is required. A report is required. An unruly passenger or diversion for emergency or for security requires documentation. Any time the flight is met with Fire, EMS, or police a report is required. Usually the reports are stored in Chief Pilots office, Senior base flight attendants office and routing as required. Often Legal is routinely notified or accessed.

Lost or damaged baggage requires another complete routing of information and legal may receive such lost baggage reports.

Other Paperwork and Reports

When a flight deviation occurs and safety or FARs is compromised, there is always the possibility of Federal certificate actions or company reprisals. Thus, one should also be cognizant of the NASA reporting system as well as an FAA safe reporting immunity system for safety whistle blowers. Useful data can be obtained through Discovery.

Company Insurance:

Very often, the company provides medical insurance for its employee's

families. It usually provides dental care, hospitalization and prescriptions. The usual format is that the bill is paid by pilot and reimbursed through claims. Many are direct billing to Company HMO's or similar. The suggestion is to discover these records as well.

Credit Cards

Credit cards are often used to pay Drs., HMOs and pharmacies. These credit card charges should be discovered and analyzed. A pilot who hides a medical condition is in violation of Federal regulation and this in turn might be negligence per se. Sometimes credit cards are used on layover and bar bills discovered in this manner.