

# Aircrew rest policy

[Environment](#), [Air](#)



What are the guiding principles to determine the aircrew rest policy? Pilot Fatigue or aircrew rest, is not the issue concerning them alone. Pilot is the key individual responsible for the overall navigation and safety, for the lives handed over to him from the moment the ladder is attached and the doors of the plane are shut till the time the passengers land safely at the destination.

Speaking from the materialistic point of view, he is in charge of a vehicle that costs millions of dollars. Other members of the crew also have clear cut duties and responsibilities.

In the state of fatigue, Pilot's efficiency and alertness are severely impaired. In this state the Pilot is just functioning, due to compulsive factors, but not alert enough. The two important physiological conditions that contribute to fatigue are, sleep loss and disruption of circadian rhythm. Shift work and long duty cycles are also the important causes. The best 'treatment' for fatigue is adequate sleep.

When the Pilot has to deviate from his fixed hour's duty, due to circumstances beyond his control, the resultant consequence is fatigue. Though the Pilot is the commander of the plane, all the flight crew members have a role to play in the total efficiency of the operation.

If the fatigued Pilot were to get a wrong communication from any crew member, the results could be disastrous. An efficient and alert Pilot will not commit mistakes, rather he will be in a position to detect the mistakes of his staff and take corrective measures. An absolutely fit and alert Pilot needs to be at the command, and no exception to this rule should be made.

The same is the case with all the crew members, because one weak link in the chain makes it worthless. If a review is made of the aviation disasters history, one can notice that human errors have contributed much to such mishaps.

In a National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) safety study of US major carrier accidents involving flight crew from 1978 to 1990, one finding directly addressed the concern about fatigue. It stated: " Half the captains for whom data were available had been awake for more than 12 hours prior to their accidents.

Half the first officers had been awake for more than 11 hours. Crews comprising captains and first officers whose time since awake was above the median for their crew position made more errors overall and significantly more procedural and tactical decision errors."(Strauss, n. d.)

In most of the cases cited above, it was found that the entire flight crew suffered from cumulative loss of sleep. Continuous wakefulness had a telling effect on their efficiency.

Therefore, crew rest and flying hours assume importance and deserve review year after year. With new types of aircrafts being introduced and the ' models' changing quite frequently in the area of commercial aviation, the issue of crew rest policy needs constant attention and follow up action.

Even though technically it is correct to assume that the actual duty hours of the Pilot and crew members start the moment the Pilot switches on the controls, the fact is otherwise.

Fatigue building is a gradual process. There are many reasons for the fatigue, like jet lag, loss of sleep due to disturbance in the sleep environment, traveling time between the hotels to the airport flight check in, preflight procedures, mechanical or any other technical problems or weather delays etc.

A brief review of US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) flight time and rest rules for scheduled domestic commercial carriers (US Code Title 14, part 121. 471) are as follows:

Crewmember total flying time maximum of:

1000 hours in any calendar year

100 hours in any calendar month

30 hours in any 7 consecutive days

8 hours between required rest periods

Rest for scheduled flight during the 24 hours preceding the completion of any flight segment:

9 consecutive of hours rest for less than 8 hours scheduled flight time

10 hours rest for 8 hours or more, but less than 9 hours scheduled flight time

11 hours rest for 9 hours or more scheduled flight time

The flight crew duty day starts with check-in, and is considered concluded at block-in plus 15 minutes for that day's final flight. Rest periods are times when the crew member is not scheduled for flying duty. These are not

periods of restful sleep. Adequate restful sleep, however, must be achievable during these rest periods.

In addition to FAA regulations, company rules and practices also influence crew scheduling and rest issues. Company contracts with pilots, scheduling practices for bids and reserve, and productivity demands all play a part in the balance between work requirements and crew rest.