Civil Aviation Authority

SAFETY NOTICE

Number: SN–2020/0011

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Human Factors Considerations for Organisations During Covid-19 Restart Activities

This Safety Notice contains recommendations regarding operational safety.

Recipients must ensure that this Notice is copied to all members of their staff who need to take appropriate action or who may have an interest in the information (including any 'in-house' or contracted maintenance organisations and relevant outside contractors).

Applicability:	
Aerodromes:	All Aerodrome Operators All Ground Handling Organisations
Air Traffic:	All ATC
Airspace:	Not primarily affected
Airworthiness:	All Airworthiness Organisations
Flight Operations:	All AOC Operators
Licensed/Unlicensed Personnel:	ATO and Registered Facilities

1 Introduction

1.1 The impact of Covid-19 has been significant across the aviation industry, the majority of operations either ceasing or being greatly reduced, while some have changed or increased. The industry is now developing restart activities to return to some level of commercial flying operation. There may be a negative impact on the performance of people within the aviation system after months of inactivity, and with continued uncertainty about the industry recovery.

1.2 The purpose of this Safety Notice is to support the industry to understand the impact of restart activities on their staff and the potential human factors (HF) risks they should be aware of and should be managing.

2 Safety Concern

2.1 Personnel are likely to have a level of uncertainty due to the current situation. The environment they work in has experienced many physical changes and, subject to local government requirements, will probably include social distancing rules, and a requirement to wear face masks. Airport terminal layouts may have changed substantially to meet the new requirements and may appear unfamiliar. Returning personnel are likely to lack recency and be subject to a range of new processes and procedures. This high level of change presents additional stressors and may reduce their capacity and ability to monitor the operation and themselves. Therefore,

organisations and individuals should be aware of the most likely HF issues that could affect their performance.

2.2   The impact on human factors is a compound risk. There are currently multiple alleviations in place and multiple different organisations all restarting or increasing their activity levels at the same time. Organisations should include in their risk assessments an evaluation of all the relevant areas of hazards and the cumulative effect on the risk exposure for their operation.

2.3   While the majority of organisations have had greatly reduced operations, some organisations have increased their operations, including operating more unusual or ad-hoc types of duties. Operating at a high level of intensity for a long period of time comes with increased risk. It is therefore important for those operators to review their HF risks regarding COVID-19 adapted or extended operations. They also need to consider the HF risks associated with restart activities of the rest of the industry on their operation.

2.4   EASA has published a review of aviation safety issues arising from the COVID-19 Pandemic that has recognised human performance as a priority safety issue area. EASA guidelines to support restart activities are focused on the role of the operators' management system in the recovery phase.

3   Recommendations

3.1   Organisations should include HF risk assessments within their restart activities and develop mitigating activities where necessary. This also applies to those organisations who have continued to operate, as their operations may now be impacted by the restart activities of others within the aviation system.

3.2   Particular attention should be placed on the following areas:

- **Distraction** – There are likely to be multiple distractions that will need to be managed. These range from personal issues (possible threat of redundancy, coping with home schooling or other caring responsibilities), as well as those arising from the working environment (changes to procedures, social distancing, passenger behaviour, work scheduling, new issues such as discomfort from wearing protective masks etc.).

- **Decision Making** – Acknowledging that many people have had a break from normal work routines, organisations should consider allowing extra time and planning opportunity to support optimum decision-making during operations. Many processes will not work in the same way or may require additional support and should be identified and mitigated prior to restarting operations.

- **Communication** - Some forms of communication may have changed (e.g. socially distanced handovers), and care should be taken to ensure that effective communication is able to take place around the new guidelines.

- **Environment** – There will have been changes: in the environment at the airport terminal (social distancing, single direction walkways, etc); new organisational procedures; changes in collaborative working processes; and potentially changes in equipment. All of these have the potential to impact safety.

- **Employee confidence** – Mainly arising from competence, recency and familiarity. People may not feel safe and in control about returning to work, they may be unaware of the practical implications of their lack of recency, and their wellbeing and ability to work effectively should to be considered. Conversely, some people may be over-confident about their return to work and may not appreciate the changes that will be necessary.

- **Third Party** – Third party contractors may add another level of risk due to the period of little or no activity and/or a turnover of personnel.

- **Fatigue** – There may be operational or schedule related fatigue, including issues associated with periods of intense activity or under arousal due to long periods time with low workload. In addition, the issues listed above may increase fatigue as people try to adapt to the changed environment and are potentially fearful of calling in fatigued or sick.

3.3   Tools to help mitigate these issues include;

- Safety promotion activities focused on supporting people to develop an awareness and appreciation of the adjustments.
- Revising hazard and risk registers and safety management systems to adapt to the changed environment.
- A programme of refresher training for staff involved in complex tasks.
- Empowering people to slow down or stop the operation if needed.
- Recording and learning from any safety events which occur during this time.

3.4   The CAA has created an infographic to expand on the issues raised above and offer areas for consideration. See Appendix 1.

4   Further Information

4.1   Further useful information to support the management of human factors can be found at the CAA Human Factors web pages: www.caa.co.uk/humanfactors

4.2   EASA guidance:
https://www.easa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/dfu/review_of_aviation_safety_issues_from_covid-19_final_0.pdf

https://www.easa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/dfu/easa_guidelines_role_of_operators_ms_in_covid-19_recovery_phase-issue_1-16.06.2020.pdf

5   Queries

5.1   Any queries or requests for further guidance resulting from this communication should be addressed to the organisation's CAA assigned oversight team in the first instance.

5.2   Otherwise queries should be addressed to the Operational Support Officers at **OperationalSupportOfficers@caa.co.uk**.

6   Cancellation

6.1   This Safety Notice will remain in force until further notice.

Appendix 1

Aviation Re-Start Human Factors Considerations

Everyone involved in Aviation will have unique re-start considerations, these are some ideas to get you thinking.

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Be Considerate

We have all experienced different pressures and stressors during this time. Avoid assuming that you know what someone needs; ask them instead. Make sure wellbeing resources available to your people are easy to access.

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Ask the people who do the work

If processes, tasks and environments need to change as a result of new COVID requirements, consult with the people who usually do these things to help you find the best way to change them. Use a people –centred design approach.

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Be Transparent

People dislike uncertainty, make sure any changes are communicated clearly and quickly, and change-management resources put in place to help people adjust.

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Beware Skill-Fade

It may be some time since people have completed their working roles, they might need some time, a refresher, or extra memory aides to help get back into usual work. For some complex roles we will have to work back towards the new normal using a range of tools.

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Help with memory

There will be new things that we need to remember to do post-COVID. We should expect memory for new items to need support because we are busy. Help can be provided with lists, aide-memoires, training and more time.

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Take extra time

This is true for tasks or processes that you have not done in a while, and new processes that have been put in place post-COVID. Mistakes can happen when we are feeling pressured and rushing, so take extra time, and longer than you think you need.

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Allow people to say 'STOP'

With all the changes there may be new or revised processes that do not work quite the way we expect. Ensure there is a way for people to raise and record any new safety concerns, and to 'call stop' if they are concerned.

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Manage Fatigue

Fatigue issues may be more likely or more severe and need to be actively managed. New and potentially distracting factors may increase workload, exacerbating fatigue levels.

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