

June 16, 1985

MEMORANDUM

To: Bob Lewis
From: Susan Stuntz *ms*
Re: NAS Aircraft Cabin Air Quality Hearings

The day-long hearing devoted to the National Academy of Sciences' study of aircraft cabin air quality went as expected June 14, with the morning session devoted to the many issues the study will address. The afternoon session -- with witnesses representing the Coalition, ASH and the respiratory therapists joining James Repace -- focused almost entirely on smoking.

Press coverage was noticeably absent -- a few aviation trade people, INN, CNN and Post-Newsweek TV. Most who were there left during the morning session. Spectators, who numbered up to 150 during the morning, dwindled to about 50 by day's end.

Committee members were obviously hostile to the smoking issue. Chairman Thomas Chalmers, in a preview of things to come, asked all witnesses to note any conflicts of interest before they testified (he would later make a point of emphasizing scientists' connection with The Institute). Members Spengler and Stedman, too, asked a number of anti-tobacco type questions throughout the day.

Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), sponsor of the legislation that resulted in the study, kicked off the day's testimony with a review of the events that led him to propose this literature review. FAA standards are badly outdated and need overhaul, he said, noting "numerous statistics that demonstrate unhealthful conditions." He called upon NAS to identify the source of the problem and recommend remedies, citing such concerns as oxygen, bacteria, pressurization, solar radiation and toxic fumes from in-flight fires.

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Tom McSweeney of the FAA's Office of Airworthiness told the committee the FAA was hoping it could put the environmental exposure of the typical airplane passenger in perspective with the exposure of that same individual in a building or other on-ground environment. He specifically cited humidification concerns, asking the committee to make every effort to distinguish between safety issues and those of comfort.

John Reese of the Aerospace Industries Association and Don Collier of the Air Transport Association each noted the safety of the aircraft environment. Airplanes meet all applicable air quality standards at the time of design, Reese said.

Collier directed the committee to the regulatory docket where, he said, many of the issues to be addressed by the study have been examined. On the smoking issue, he said, the airlines are not defenders of tobacco use. They are, in fact, frequently the "unhappy arbiters" of disputes between smokers and nonsmokers.

Noting that fewer than one in a million passengers complains about smoking, Collier said ATA believes segregation continues to be the most effective means of dealing with the issue. And until the FDA or some other government organization declares public smoking illegal, he said, the airlines would continue to offer meet the needs of all of their passengers.

As planned, three of the four scientists asked by TI to present their views (Sal DiNardi, Mark Reasor, Sorell Schwartz) focused on the broader issue of indoor air quality, and asked that any work on ETS be placed in the proper context. Philip Witorsch rebutted claims of nonsmoker health harm from exposure to ETS, particularly with regard to compromised individuals.

James Repace, introduced as an EPA "Dr.," corrected the committee on the former, but let the title stand. He described his work on the aircraft air quality issue for the World Health Organization. Noting that he has for years wanted to study aircraft cabin air quality but has not had the funds to do so, he offered his services to the committee, which appeared receptive to the possibility. He discussed his risk assessment models in general; he made no direct reference to the Environment International report or its figures.

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Passenger groups stressed the comfort aspects of air travel and claimed that airlines are not following regulations requiring adequate ventilation. Also noted was the 1984 Gallup poll for Newsweek, in which passengers said they favored a smoking ban to cut down on the danger from in-flight fires.

The flight attendants cited a number of concerns with air quality in their working environment. The two unions that appeared said they would seriously consider a smoking ban in their workplace; both are particularly concerned with the reproductive health of female attendants. Questions were raised about the effects on pregnant flight attendants who work the smoking sections.

Matt Myers of the Coalition called for increased protection for nonsmoking passengers and flight attendants. Athena Muller spoke on behalf of ASH's John Banzhaf. ASH focused on the workplace aspect of the aircraft cabin, citing legal precedent for smoking bans, as well as the potential for liability suits from passengers. Environmental tobacco smoke, ASH said, represents a "clear and present" health hazard.

Two groups which make a living selling ventilation filtering and cleaning services pitched overall problems in the aircraft ventilation system. A smoking ban should not be allowed to substitute for adequate ventilation, claimed Bertil Werjefelt of the Xenex Corp.

Attached are copies of all comments made at the Friday hearing.

Attachments

cc: Sam Chilcote
William Kloepfer
Peter Sparber
Judy Wiedemeier
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Info Services

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