

Change... Sometimes It Can Be a Good Thing

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Last year, during the U.S. Presidential campaign, we heard the word “change” over and over again. So much in fact we each probably started to wince or roll our eyes whenever we heard the word uttered. I know that, as Flight Attendants, we more than likely have each become creatures of habit, be it the way we prepare for work, pack our suitcases, set up our liquor/meal carts, beverage inserts, galleys, etc. We could probably do all of this in our sleep, or blindfolded. As soon as something changes from the norm or upsets our daily routine everything seems to be disrupted. Once we have grown accustomed to a change, we seem to be a little more flexible and understand there could be some benefit to it. Here are a few examples of some significant changes we have seen in our work place and their benefits:

Window exit briefings prior to departure:

Before 1999, as Flight Attendants at AA, we did not conduct window exit briefings on our aircraft prior to gate departure. During the accident investigation of AA1420, an MD 80 aircraft that crashed upon landing in LIT on June 1, 1999, it was discovered during interviews that some passengers seated in the window exit rows were *unaware there was an exit located in their row of seats*. This may have cost valuable time and slowed the process in evacuating passengers through those useable exits before the fire moved into the cabin area. Recommendations were made to brief/inform passengers seated in these rows of the close proximity/location of the exits and the added responsibility that comes with being seated in these rows.

Door arming/disarming PA:

Our procedures in previous years was that any Flight Attendant with door arming/disarming responsibilities would contact the FA 1/Purser and advise her/him via the interphone they had accomplished this step. Many times the FA 1/Purser was occupied in the cabin and may have been unable to answer the phone. Unfortunately, inadvertent slide deployments were increasing. A change was made for those Flight Attendants with door arming/disarming responsibilities to make a PA so not only the FA 1/Purser—but all crew members—could hear and know if the task was accomplished.

Flight Attendant Safety Manual:

Departure/Taxi 1.2, Door Arming Procedures
Landing/Arrival/Post-Flight 1.1, Door Disarming:
Arming/Disarming

“Flight Attendants will notify via PA that applicable doors have been armed/disarmed and cross checked.”

Example: 757— FA 2 will state over the PA: *“4L/R prepared and cross checked.”* If you don’t hear the PA from the responsible Flight Attendant you should contact them to ensure the step was accomplished.

Advanced Qualification Program (AQP) Recurrent Training:

Early in 2009, the FAA approved the new Advanced Qualification Program (AQP). This replaces our former Recurrent Training program which will transition from the old, traditional FAR 121 program into an approved FAA voluntary program. You will notice the change when you attend your 2009-2010 class. It is a proficiency-based training concept. The benefits of this type of training will allow the required number of training hours to be reduced. Flight Attendants may also be able to “test out” of certain areas of the training. Example: taking a pre-quiz and successfully passing may allow a Flight Attendant to not have to complete all four hours of online training if they demonstrate a higher level of proficiency. There will no longer be hours of classroom lecture but rather Flight Attendants will be assigned scenarios as crewmembers and passengers to reenact a safety/security situation. Flight Attendants are encouraged to utilize their Flight Attendant manuals to best handle the situation and to work as a crew. *All aspects of training will be completed in one day, reducing the amount of time spent away from home.*

Cabin Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP):

A dramatic change we have seen recently was the long-sought implementation of the Cabin ASAP program. It brought about a definite culture change at AA because it is very different from how things were previously handled regarding discipline. We know that AA and Flight Service had no problems issuing discipline if Flight Attendants were found to have violated FARs or company policies. In the several months since this new safety program started on January 15, 2009, over 317 reports have been received. Many of these Flight Attendants have already benefited from the program as they were not subjected to company/FAA discipline when they submitted their reports regarding, for example: blown slides, out-of-date manuals, minimum crew violations and not briefing exit rows.

APFA Safety/Security Department:

Not all the Safety/Security changes have happened on the line. The APFA Safety/Security Department has undergone some of its own. For 15 years I have worked in the Safety/Security department as a Rep-on-Duty and Accident Investigation "Go Team" member. I served as the Coordinator of the Department for the past five years. I recently decided to make a change myself and elected to hand over the reins of the Department. I have returned back to the line to fly so this will be my last Safety/Security **Skyword** article. The department is being left in the excellent and capable hands of IMA Flight Attendant Kelly Skyles who has been appointed as the new National Safety/Security Coordinator. For over the past three years I have had the distinct pleasure and honor of working with and training Kelly. She is truly a dedicated individual who possesses the experience, knowledge and determination this department requires. I have no doubt she will do a phenomenal job. Kelly will continue to provide the highest level of professionalism and representation that our members, APFA, AA and the aviation community have grown to expect from our department. Please take this opportunity to welcome Kelly.



Kelly Skyles and Lonny Glover

My passion has always been aviation safety; that is one thing that will never change! In closing I ask that you never forget the reason we are on board the aircraft: it is because we are Safety Professionals.

Fly safe and I will see you on the line! 