

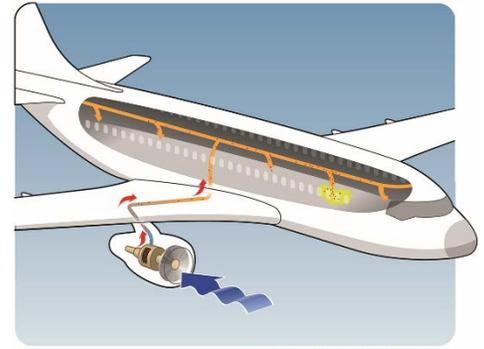
## Senator Blumenthal's Cabin Air Safety Act of 2017

### The Issue

**Health Hazards of Aircraft Cabin Air:** Most people don't know that the air they breathe in the cabin of a passenger plane is first drawn through the aircraft's engines. While safe in theory, the air can become contaminated with engine exhaust, de-icing fluids, and ozone as it enters the plane. The air can absorb engine oil fumes from the aircraft engines. Despite the potential for harm, the air that we breathe on planes goes unmonitored for hazards.

**Recent "Toxic Fume" Events:** Poisons and toxins that contaminate aircraft air can incapacitate passengers and crew – sometimes permanently. These incidents have picked up an industry term of their own: a "toxic fume" event.

- 2017: Seven crewmembers on an American Airlines A330 flight were hospitalized after landing due to symptoms caused by fumes. <sup>1</sup> It was the third incident of toxic fume contamination aboard the very same aircraft in months.
- 2016: The captain of a London-bound British Airways Airbus A380 reported a "toxic fume" emergency and diverted the plane to Canada. <sup>2</sup> Flight attendants working this flight became so sick from the fumes that they were unable to tend to passengers, and the entire crew was admitted to the hospital upon landing.
- 2013: Four Alaska Airlines flight attendants were exposed to toxic fumes on a Boeing 737 and continue to experience such severe chronic symptoms that they can no longer work as flight attendants. Their lawsuit against Boeing is pending. <sup>3</sup>



**A Problem Decades in the Making:** Academic research suggests approximately 20,000 toxic fume events have occurred over the last decade – the equivalent of up to five events daily in the U.S. The FAA recognizes that toxic fumes jeopardize flight safety, but the agency has no standard process to collect reports from crew about fume events and has no fixed procedures to investigate such incidents. This means that the true extent of toxic fume contamination remains largely unknown and unreported. Commercial carriers have no mandate to install carbon monoxide detectors on their planes to alert the crew to toxic air, meaning that crews have little more than their sense of smell to alert them to toxic fumes. A lack of training, sensors, and data leaves pilots, flight attendants, and passengers with little recourse beyond word-of-mouth to protect themselves.

### The Bill

The Cabin Air Safety Act of 2017 makes the air on airplanes safer by:

- **Mandating Training Regarding Toxic Fumes on Aircraft:** Requires that flight attendants, pilots, aircraft technicians, and first responders receive training each year on identifying toxic fumes. The training materials will include education on sources and types of fumes, symptoms, appropriate responses, and ways to report incidents.
- **Requiring FAA to Record and Monitor Reports of Fume Events:** Directs the FAA to develop a standardized form and system to record crew reports of toxic fumes. The FAA will be required to publish these reports at least quarterly on a public website so that they can be searched, reviewed, and analyzed.
- **Ensuring Investigations Occur:** Requires the FAA to conduct investigations in cooperation with the airlines and labor organizations after a toxic fume event to study the cause and prevent future events.
- **Installing Carbon Monoxide Sensors on Aircraft:** Directs airline manufacturers and air carriers to install and operate carbon monoxide detectors in the cockpit, the cabin, and each crew galley. These detectors will alert the crew if levels exceed those set in national air quality standards. Aircraft manufacturers must develop procedures that inform the crew on how to respond to alarms.

### **Bill Endorsed By:**

- Association of Flight Attendants (AFA-CWA)
- Allied Pilots Association (APA)
- Association of Professional Flight Attendants (APFA)
- Teamsters
- National Consumers League (NCL)
- Southwest Airlines Pilots' Association (SWAPA)
- International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM)

<sup>1</sup> E. Dooley, "American Airlines Jet Has 3rd Fume Incident in 3 Months" *ABC News*, January 2017. <http://abcnews.go.com/US/american-airlines-jet-suffers-fume-incident-months-flight/story?id=44535862>

<sup>2</sup> B. Gittleson, "British Airways Flight to San Francisco Diverted After Crew Suffer Mystery Illness," *ABC News*, October 2016. <http://abcnews.go.com/US/british-airways-flight-san-francisco-diverted-vancouver-crew/story?id=43042541>

<sup>3</sup> R. Stickney, "Flight Attendants Sue Boeing, Claim Injuries Due to Toxic Cabin Air," *NBC San Diego*, June 2015. <http://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/Toxic-Fumes-Cabin-Air-Plane-Flight-San-Diego-Chicago-Boston-309372411.html>