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Not So Happy Skies

JetBlue Incident Shines Light on the Reality of Life as a Flight Attendant

**Flight Attendants Available for Interviews
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Eules, Texas - There's a deeper story behind the unfortunate Steven Slater JetBlue incident -- the impact the tremendous changes in the airline industry have had on airline employees over the last decade. Air travel isn't what it used to be and 9/11 fundamentally altered the way we fly.

What many in the public don't realize is the job of a flight attendant has changed drastically since the glamour days of the 1970's. The security and safety of passengers is still the No. 1 priority, but with airlines continuing to cut back on amenities -- no food, charges for checked bags, smaller seats, cramped passengers -- flight attendants must now deal with more stressed and frustrated passengers.

Furthermore, flight attendants have seen their pay slashed over the last decade. Most flight attendants are working more hours for less just to make ends meet. And some of those hours are unpaid because flight attendants are only paid when the aircraft door is closed and pushed from the gate. Flight attendants are not paid during boarding and deplaning, or during most delays.

Flight attendants can be on the job for 15 consecutive hours and then receive only an 8.5-hour rest period during which time they must travel to and from the airport and hotel, and find something to eat. When all is said and done, actual rest time is reduced to well under 8 hours.

This rise in frustration and aggravation onboard flights among flight attendants and passengers is not being felt in the airline executive suites. Customers are being nickel and dimed for everything as airline executives continue to reward themselves with multi-million dollar bonuses.

What this boils down to is the airline industry needs to change. The think tank Demos offers some suggestions on how to achieve that in the following report.

http://www.demos.org/pubs/airline_0623.pdf

Below are some of responsibilities and issues that flight attendants deal with everyday on the job in their demanding profession that most of the public has no knowledge of:

1. In what job is an employee required to remain on duty for as much as 18 hours in a single day?
2. In what job must an employee be away from home up to 18 nights a month?
3. In what job is an employee responsible for the safety of hundreds of people at any given time?
4. In what job must an employee carry a 500-page, government-mandated safety manual at all times?
5. In what job must an employee pass an annual safety test in order to remain employed?
6. In what job does an employee assist injured people on the ground, in the water and in the air?
7. In what job does an employee deal with more than 8,000 customers every month?
8. In what job is the employee required to evacuate an aircraft in 90 seconds?

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APFA is the nation's largest independent Flight Attendant union representing nearly 18,000 American Airlines Flight Attendants. www.apfa.org