



## Information Article

**Tour Operator Assistance** to **Associated Airline Station Manager(s)** (or equivalent e.g. GHA[s]) during major crisis at, near or otherwise related to **Tour Operator supported** local airport(s)



Applicable to - Inclusive **Tour Operator** / Locally Based Destination / Resort (& Similar) Staff

### Relevance

Airline Emergency / Crisis Response - Locally based Tour Operator assistance to directly associated local airport(s) Station Managers (or equivalent) during major crisis - typically related to a catastrophic aircraft accident type scenario

**Note 1** - This information document is generally applicable to charter / holiday package type airlines only (either owned by / operating in close conjunction with an inclusive tour operator [holiday package] type organisation)

**Note 2** - The airline (airport services) representative at a station, and as understood in this document - can be either a direct airline employee or some form of sub-contracted handling agent. In all cases the generic term for such person as used in this information article is '**station manager**'

**Note 3** - The following assumptions have been made for the purposes of this information article only:

- A major (catastrophic) aircraft accident occurs at or near an appropriate airline 'on-line' station / destination airport
- Airline associated **tour operator** representatives (and / or their appropriate sub-contracted organisation[s]) are **locally** available to respond to the emergency / crisis - in direct and / or indirect support of the airline Station Manager (or equivalent person)





## Introduction

For a variety of reasons, the weakest part of any airline's emergency response planning effort is, by far, the preparation for a catastrophic aircraft accident type scenario - at or near an airline on-line Station (or other destination airport - as applicable) - other than the airline's main HQ and / or main hub airport. Accordingly, an airline's emergency response planning policy & implementation for such Stations is, arguably, the most demanding and critical component of its entire emergency response plan

Any passenger airline will need to consider and attempt to address a multitude of problematic issues associated with emergency response planning for emergency at or close to its on-line stations / regular destination airports, with two of the major issues generally being related to:

- Distance of accident location from airline's home base / hub / HQ location - thus directly impacting on the [time](#) for HQ airline support (e.g. GO Team [including the Humanitarian Assistance element of the latter]) to arrive 'on site' (e.g. up to 36 to 48 hours in extremis)
- Inadequate levels of [local](#) station staff competence, manpower, facilities and other local resources - commensurate with providing a 'fit for purpose' response to a major emergency

Whilst there are generally several options available to [scheduled](#) passenger airlines (and similar) which might go some way in reducing the effects of such problems - none are ideal. Conversely, the *charter* ([inclusive tour / package](#)) airline is [typically](#) (but not always) better placed due the possibility of manpower and other resources available locally from [associated local tour operator staff](#) - typically comprising:

- ✓ Management, supervisory and administration staff
- ✓ Airport 'meet / greet / transfer / customer service' tour operator staff
- ✓ Tour guides
- ✓ Hotel reps
- ✓ 'Carers' e.g. babysitting and crèche
- ✓ Entertainers etc.

For example, at the most popular *European* inclusive tour operator / package holiday destinations (e.g. typically Palma [Spain / Balearics] in northern hemisphere summer and Tenerife [Spain / Canaries] in northern hemisphere winter) - the numbers of tour operator staff able to support the associated station (airport) emergency response effort will be a significant, advantageous factor to account for - in airline emergency response planning at such destinations

### Tour Operator - Direct Support of Associated Station Manager or Equivalent Person (e.g. GHA)

Assignment of a proportion of [local](#) tour operator staff to [directly](#) support associated station managers at local airports - in the event of a major aircraft related crisis, is expected to markedly improve the chances of achieving the desired outcomes





This applies equally in terms of humanitarian response and support (provided to accident victims plus their associated family, relatives and friends - **FR**) together with the effects on brand, image and reputation of both the tour operator and / or the associated airline involved

However, sufficient local tour operator staff must, of course, also remain concurrently *unassigned* to crisis duties - as they will be required to maintain their own 'normal' operations plus deal with any knock-on disruption effects caused by the crisis

Consequently, this information article (*the one you are now reading*) aims to provide a brief and simple guide - which tour operators and associated charter / similar airlines can use, when producing emergency response plans (**ERP**) for aircraft related occurrences (accidents and serious incidents) - *where a joint 'local airline station' and 'local tour operator' response is envisaged*

Note - of course, such guidance can also be easily adapted for other tour operator specific related crises which might have nothing to do with the airline e.g. hotel fire; ground transport accident; cruise ship incident; mass food poisoning events; hurricane (natural disaster) etc.

The term 'direct support' as used above / herein refers to local tour operator staff support of the associated station manager *at or near to the airport itself*. This will typically include (for the tour operator):

- Appropriate training and exercising in direct crisis support roles *at or near the airport(s) concerned*
- Acquisition of the appropriate airport passes, permits and other appropriate documentation - including *airside* access passes / permits - if so required and possible
- For an actual crisis - deployment to and crisis support at all 'crisis action sites' envisaged e.g. at
  - The Station Manager's office from where the latter will command & control the airline aspects (locally) of the crisis
  - The airport information desk(s) (gathering point for 'meeters & greeters / FR' etc.)
  - The airport (airside) *uninjured crew* reception centre
  - The airport (airside) *uninjured passenger* reception centre
  - The airport (landside) *family, relatives & friends (FR)* reception centre
  - Reuniting / Reunion Centres
  - Local hospitals
  - Local mortuaries
  - The landside / off-airport - uninjured crew reception centre (*hotel A*)
  - The landside / off-airport - uninjured passenger reception centre (*hotel B*)
  - The landside / off-airport - Family (Humanitarian) Assistance Centre (*hotel C*)
  - GO Team (deployed from airline HQ) local support and liaison (on arrival)





*Tour Operator - Indirect Support of Associated Station Manager or Equivalent Person (e.g. GHA)*

The tour operator shall continue to provide indirect support to an associated station manager(s) - as has always been the case e.g.

- ✓ Assistance with sourcing extra ground transport
- ✓ Assistance with sourcing extra accommodation
- ✓ Customer (in resort) communications
- ✓ Assistance with other local communications
- ✓ Assistance with sources of emergency finance
- ✓ Provision of translators
- ✓ Local knowledge and 'contacts' facilitation etc.





## The Plan

### TEMPLATE

#### CATASTROPHIC AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT & SIMILAR IMPACT CRISES

##### 'LOCAL' TOUR OPERATOR ASSISTANCE to 'LOCAL' STATION MANAGER(S) & OTHER AIRPORT STAFF

- ✓ *Gain* appropriate airline and / or tour operator *top manager* (Chairman, Managing Director etc) *approval for the project*. *Without such approval the project should be considered non-viable* (everything else below assumes that such approval has been provided)
- ✓ Select a *representative* and at least one *deputy from both sides* (i.e. from the airline [Station Manager side] - & from the tour operator side) - *to 'project manage' the task*

Where the airline is represented at the local airport by a \*Ground Handling Agent (GHA) or similar - airline HQ should 'negotiate' with the GHA for their participation / representation. Similar shall apply to the tour operator where local 'tour operator' type services are sub-contracted

\*Note 1 - the International Air Transport Association's - '*Standard Ground Handling Agreement*' (IATA SGHA 2008 or 2013) specifically allows for such negotiation with the appointed GHA, in support of the client air carriers' emergency response plans

Note 2 - the 'task' referred to above comprises:

- Researching the plan *requirements* - as associated with 'LOCAL TOUR OPERATOR ASSISTANCE to LOCAL STATION MANAGER(S) & OTHER AIRPORT STAFF'
- '*Writing*' the plan
- *Developing* and *resourcing* the plan
- *Implementing* the plan
- *Training* the plan (Initial & recurrent)
- *Exercising* the plan (Regularly e.g. once or twice per annum)
- *Maintaining* the plan (On-going)
- *Reviewing* the plan (Periodically or as required e.g. feedback post crisis and / or exercises)
- *Continually improving* the plan

Note 3 - the selected representatives (and deputies) referred to further above should eventually become 'champions' and 'experts' of / in all aspects of the plan - including implementation, maintenance, resourcing, training and exercising - therefore, careful consideration by appropriate management should be given to the selection process of all such persons





- ✓ All appointed representatives / deputies to become familiar with relevant aspects of:
  - The local airport's emergency plan (AEP)
  - The charter airline's station emergency response plan (Airline ERP) i.e. the ERP for the airport(s) which the tour operator is expected to support
  - The local GHA's station ERP - if any, and as appropriate (GHA ERP)
  - The Tour Operator's ERP (if any) as it relates to major aircraft accident at or near to the associated local airport(s)
  - Any other local emergency plans of relevance

Note - where no viable Airline ERP exists at the local station / destination airport - it will generally *not be possible to commence this project / task*

Lack of a local station Airline ERP is generally regarded in 'quality airline circles' as a serious dereliction of 'corporate responsibility'. However, as at 2014, the reader should note that a large number of airlines (of all types) around the world still have no viable ERP. Same applies to GHAs

Note - all commercial airports are legally required to have an AEP as part of the procedure for the granting of an airport operating licence. That said, the quality (and even existence) of AEPs varies markedly around the world

- ✓ Agree, document and act as follows (with regard to the project / task):
  - Desired scope (what will be included)
  - Required objectives (what needs to be achieved)
  - Top Management approvals 'in principle' (to be subsequently confirmed)
  - Details of project / task team plus their 'terms of reference' (roles, responsibilities & accountabilities)
  - Required resources - including budget, manpower, facilities, logistics etc.
  - Outline of how it is intended to proceed with the project (project plan)
  - Produce (document / write) the first outline (framework / draft) version of the plan
  - Arrange initial consultation re the outline plan with all appropriate stakeholders
  - Update the outline plan as per accepted feedback from stakeholder consultation
  - Conduct a second stakeholder consultation re the updated plan
  - Any further accepted feedback to be incorporated and final plan produced
  - Final plan presented to top management for approval and sign-off
- ✓ Implement the plan (make it happen for real i.e. turn the written plan into a reality)
- ✓ Train in the plan
  - Plan for initial and ongoing recurrent (refresher) joint training for all involved staff
  - Produce a documented training manual





- Conduct training
- Maintain (keep / retain) training records
- An element of the training should include humanitarian support type issues (e.g. consider providing basic Humanitarian Assistance type training for appropriate [local] airport and tour operator staff)

✓ **Exercise in the plan**

- Plan to conduct one major (full simulation) joint exercise annually - testing the whole or major plan elements
- Plan to conduct one minor joint exercise (desktop or similar) six monthly - testing selected modular parts of plan on a rotating basis
- Collect post-exercise feedback and update the plan as necessary
- Maintain (keep / retain) exercise records

Note - it would be most effective, efficient and beneficial to arrange one of the major exercises to be held in conjunction with the local airport's own major exercise - which generally occurs every two years - and so on

✓ **Maintain the plan**

Update the plan on a regular planning cycle to incorporate e.g. changes of personnel; telephone and other contact information; procedural changes etc.

Devise a suitable controlled documentation system to ensure that all such changes are effectively, efficiently and expeditiously notified to those needing them and ensure that receipt and update (incorporation) of same is acknowledged in some way

✓ **Review the plan**

The purpose of the review is to ensure that the plan remains suitable for purpose. Whilst it is expected that the plan will be continually reviewed on an informal basis by those responsible for its implementation and maintenance on a daily basis - the term 'review' as used here refers to top management's scrutiny of the plan

The review should be conducted periodically (e.g. at least every two years and / or as otherwise required by circumstances) and the 'reviewed' plan signed-off on each occasion by top management

- ✓ Continually improve the plan e.g. via compliance audit; operational inspection etc.





### How might the finished plan look?

It is not the intention of this information article to go into a detailed description of how the finished plan might be laid out. However, a brief and simple description of a suggested layout follows below - in order to provide a limited degree of guidance

#### SECTION 1

A one page introduction (use bullet points) listing all of the plan's 'must haves'

#### SECTION 2

The Emergency / Crisis Contacts Telephone (& all other appropriate contact information) Directory for the plan

#### SECTION 3

Bullet point type checklists for what each person designated under the plan needs to do

#### SECTION 4

Definitions of terms used in the plan - combined with 'additional explanatory material'

#### SECTION 5

A much more detailed version of PART 1 - explaining (where required) the 'who / what / where / when / why and how' such 'must haves' are to be operationally managed during real emergencies and / or exercises (also useful to facilitate training). The single word which describes what is required here is the production of associated 'procedures'

Note - the intent here is to make available to users two versions of the plan. The 'short' (abbreviated) version comprises PARTS 1 to 3. The addition of PARTS 4 & 5 make up the 'full' version

Those station and tour operator staff already comfortable with the plan (or with similar plans / concepts) and its use may wish to refer only to the short plan - whereas those new to the plan or not so confident with it might wish to use the full version initially. The full version will be of particular use in facilitating training

