Passenger Airlines & Similar - Catastrophic (Mass Fatality) Aircraft Accident

Customs, Culture & Religious Aspects - as Related to Humanitarian Assistance Type Operations

Relevance:

Airline Crisis / Emergency Response Operations

Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and their (non-flying) **Family, Relatives and Friends**

Note 1 - Terms and acronyms used in this article are mainly *generic* i.e. not specific to any airline, airport etc. Whilst many will be the same or similar to actual terms in use, the 'generic' use and nature of such terms and abbreviations should always be remembered and accounted for accordingly

'Humanitarian Assistance Team - HAT' is the *preferred* term in general use in this info article. However, as many airlines world-wide currently use directly equivalent terms such as 'Family Assistance Team', 'Special Assistance Team - SAT' and 'Care Team' (there are many more), such terms should be interpreted (if used in this article) as having the same meaning as (and are interchangeable with) '*Humanitarian Assistance Team*'

Note 2 - for an explanation of any of the terminology used in this 'generic' information article - please refer to (*separate*) 'information article' entitled '**Glossary of Terms**' which can be found at:

https://www.aviationemergencyresponseplan.com/information/

The latter is just one in this complete series of 'Information article' documents (you are reading another right now) dealing with airline, airport and similar aviation organisations' response to 'Catastrophic Aircraft Accident' - and similar type occurrences

INTRODUCTION

AIRLINE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TEAM (**HAT**) Operations - Required Background Reading

Before looking at the customs, culture, religious and ethical aspects of *airline* humanitarian assistance / humanitarian assistance team type operations, it is advisable for the 'serious' reader to gain (if not already so familiar) a reasonable working knowledge of airline humanitarian assistance type operations *in general* - together with other, directly related matters

In order to achieve this, please refer to the following, separate reference documents (as required) via the internet links shown in each of the boxes below (finishes on page 4 ['casual' readers might want to skip directly to page 6]):

Note - the term 'humanitarian assistance' as used contextually herein is absolutely the correct term to use. However, other equivalent (but pedantically incorrect) terminology has been (and still is) in widespread aviation use around the world. The most common equivalents are '**Family Assistance**' and '**Special Assistance**'

For the sake of simplicity, the reader may assume that all three terms mean the same thing with regard to this information article only (i.e. the document you are reading now). However, do be aware that the term 'Special Assistance' is also in widespread use in the aviation world with a fundamentally different meaning e.g. assistance to elderly and / or disabled passengers; unaccompanied minor (children) services etc.

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https://www.aviationemergencyresponseplan.com/information/

When the 'linked to' webpage opens, scroll down until you find the information articles (two separate articles) entitled:

* Information Article - **The Airline Humanitarian** (Family) **Assistance Team**

* Information Article - **Calculate Optimum Size** for an airline Humanitarian Assistance Team

Click on each article (in the website) to open and read

Note - for those readers wishing to explore the subject of the 'airline humanitarian assistance team' in greater depth, please follow the below link:

https://www.aviationemergencyresponseplan.com/guideline-template/

When the 'linked to' webpage opens, scroll down until you find the title:

Airline - Catastrophic Aircraft Accident - Emergency Response Plan - **ERP**

A little further below this title you will see **10** documents. Click on the one (in the website) referred to immediately below, in order to open and read it:

CRPM Part 1 (ERP) / Volume 3 - **Humanitarian Assistance Operations**

The below (cross-referenced) extracts (again, from a *separate* document to the one that you are reading now) specifically advises *surviving*, (catastrophic) *air accident victims* (together with their *'non-flying' family, relatives and friends*) what they can expect to *'happen next'* - in the immediate, short, medium and longer terms following on from the accident itself. It is essential that airline staff closely involved in humanitarian assistance type operations understand what is written in these cross-referenced extracts, including associated definitions / terminology used etc.

Whilst this *separate* document is targeted primarily at surviving victims and their families etc. - it will nevertheless also be extremely useful to emergency responders (particularly airlines, GHAs and airports) for what are hopefully obvious reasons

So please now study the recommended pages from this *separate* document. They can be found at:

Go to - https://www.aviationemergencyresponseplan.com/information/

When the webpage opens, scroll down until you find the information article entitled:

* Information Article - Guidance for Victims & their Families following a Catastrophic Aircraft Accident i.e.
'What Happens Next'

Click on the article to open it

Pages to study are 2 - 9; 22 - 68 and 70 - 79

Next we need to look at the most relevant of the legal, regulatory, best practice and similar requirements which relate to aviation related humanitarian assistance type operations. Please see the info contained (follow the links) in the following boxes:

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https://www.aviationemergencyresponseplan.com/information/

When the 'linked to' webpage opens, scroll down until you find the information article entitled:

* Information Article - ICAO Annex 9, Facilitation, Ch 8 (8.41. to 8.46)
- '**Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims & their Families**'

Click on the article (in the website) to open and read

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https://www.icao.int/SAM/Documents/2016-AIG-RECORDSPRO/Doc%209973.Family%20Assistance_en.pdf

http://www.icao.int/Meetings/a38/Documents/DOC**9998**_en.pdf

Note - in the event that the above links 'do not work', please conduct an associated internet search for 'ICAO Doc 9973 AN/486' and a separate search for 'ICAO Doc 9998 AN/499'

IMPORTANT NOTE: Referring to the boxed info immediately above and to the document to be found at the end of the first link shown there (The document is '**ICAO Doc 9973 - Manual on Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and their Families** [First Edition - 2013]) - take a look at Appendix 3, which provides an example of what one (de-identified but thought likely to be from the USA?) major airline has produced under the title:

'………………EXAMPLE OF ONE AIRLINE'S GUIDANCE MATERIAL ON LAWS, CUSTOMS AND CULTURE AT INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS………………'

This airline would typically have researched and produced similar information for every overseas country that it operated to outside of its home country. Although this might be a major undertaking (particularly if the airline operates to / from many overseas countries / airports - as this one probably did / does) - it is not quite as bad (work intensive) as might be first thought to be the case

This is because most airlines compiling such guidance do so through their own and / or contracted handling staff in such overseas countries / at such overseas airports. This is typically accomplished by airline HQ producing an appropriate template, sending the latter to airline reps at all overseas countries / airports - and directing that the template requirements are researched, completed and returned to airline HQ in a stated timeframe

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https://www.aviationemergencyresponseplan.com/information/

When the 'linked to' webpage opens, scroll down until you find the information article entitled:

* Information Article - Humanitarian (Family) Assistance Statutory and Best Practice Requirements - **Australia**; **Brazil**; **China**; **EU**; **Indonesia 1**; **Indonesia 2**; **Italy**; **Netherlands**, **S Korea**; **Spain**; **UAE** and **USA**

Click on the different countries etc. linked to in the article (in the website) to open and read

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Lastly, we also need to take a look at a number of miscellaneous, additional subject areas which will have an influence in one way or another - and to a greater or lesser degree, on 'customs, culture, religious and ethical aspects of **airline** humanitarian assistance / humanitarian assistance team' type operations. These subjects are cross-referred to in the box shown immediately below:

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https://www.aviationemergencyresponseplan.com/information/

When the 'linked to' webpage opens, scroll down until you find the information articles entitled:

* Information Article - **Air Accident Investigation**
* Information Article - **Data Protection Aspects of Airline Emergency Response Ops**
* Information Article - **Disaster Victim Identification** (DVI) + & **Personal Effects** (PEs) Recovery Operations
* Information Article - The Airline **Emergency Call Centre** (ECC)
* Information Article - **GO Team Operations**
* Information Article - **Information Cards** for use in Survivor Centres; Family, Relatives and Friends Centres etc.
* Information Article - Major Air Accident - **'Next of Kin' / 'Closest Relative' / 'Emergency Contact Person'**
* Information Article - **Passenger Manifest Verification** - PMV
* Information Article / Form - **Victim Record Card** & **Family, Relatives and Friends Enquiry Card**

Click on each article (in the website) to open and read

This information article (the document being read now) continues (on the next page) on the assumption that the reader is now familiar enough with the concept of airline humanitarian assistance type operations in general (as cross-referred to on pages 2 to 4 above) to be reasonably 'comfortable' with what is to follow re *'customs, culture, religious and ethical aspects of airline humanitarian assistance / humanitarian assistance team'* type operations

Last point to make here is that most of the information contained herein (above and what follows below) will also be found useful to commercial, passenger **airports** and to **ground handling agents / operators** (and others - as applicable) who work at such airports

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WHAT THIS INFO ARTICLE IS ALL ABOUT

In the context of a catastrophic (mass fatality) accident to an aircraft operated by e.g. a major, international airline, the latter will typically invoke its 'emergency response plan - ERP' should such an accident occur

Note - what is stated in the above paragraph must be put into some 'reality' context here - in that a significant number of passenger airlines (including some 'major' airlines) will have no viable ERP whatsoever - either (more rarely today) because such a plan does not exist at all OR (much more likely today) because many such existing ERPs are totally unfit for purpose - **FACT**

However, we shall now continue this information article on the assumption that the accident airline referred to in this info article *does* have a viable, fit for purpose ERP and supporting infrastructure

A typical airline ERP needs to be able to adequately deal with all aspects of the catastrophic air accident type situation, most coming under the following general subject headings:

- ERP Overview (Executive Summary of the whole ERP)
- Command, Control, Co-ordination & Communication (C4) Type Ops
- Humanitarian (Family / Special etc.) Assistance Type Ops
- Emergency Telephone (Call / Info) Centre Type Ops
- GO (Field) Team Type Ops *if* accident location not very local to airline HQ / major hub airport
- Airline Station (Destination / Landing Airport) Type Ops
- Crisis Support Unit (responding Airline Departments / Business Units) Type Ops
- Integrated ERP Type Ops (with partner airlines e.g. Alliance, Codeshare etc.)
- Crisis Communications Type Ops (communicating with media + other involved stakeholders)
- Training, Exercising, Maintaining & Reviewing the ERP

In the context (custom, culture, religion etc.) of *this* information article (i.e. the document that you are reading now) we are concerned primarily with an airline's provision of 'Humanitarian (Family / Special etc.) Assistance Type Ops' - but there is also a consideration with regard to 'Emergency Telephone (Call / Info) Centre Type Ops'

The **purpose** of *this* information article is to try to provide airline staff (involved directly in the provision of humanitarian assistance related ops as related to a catastrophic air accident situation) with associated information which might be used to better provide such service with regard to custom, culture and religious considerations of the potential recipients of said service

The **scope** of *this* information article is necessarily narrow in order to limit the size of the article. The intent is to provide a relatively simplified example (an approximate / outline template if the reader wishes to look at it in this way) with regard to one of the world's major religions

As with all religions - different culture, customs and traditions are involved. However, the scope of this information article respectfully only permits a very generalised consideration of same

CUSTOMS, CULTURE & RELIGIOUS ASPECTS of AIRLINE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TYPE OPS

Some Simplified Definitions

The terms 'culture' and 'custom' are interrelated concepts that are unique to different social group around the world

Culture is a complex whole including beliefs, knowledge, rituals, morals, *customs* and numerous other habits and capabilities acquired by people, by simply being members of society

Custom is a traditional way of behaving or doing something that is specific to a particular place, time and society

The main difference between culture and custom is that custom is a part of the associated culture or, to be more accurate, it is a representation of that culture

A particular gesture, behaviour, event, act etc. turns into a custom when it is continuously practiced.

When the custom is followed for a long period and passed down through generations, it becomes a **Tradition**

Ethics (the branch of philosophy dealing with 'morality') is typically concerned with distinguishing between e.g. good and evil in the world, between right and wrong human actions, between virtuous and non-virtuous characteristics of people etc. The word can be used in a generalised and / or a specific context e.g. medical ethics being an example of the latter

Religion is not defined herein as it can mean so many things, in so many ways to so many people - and to try to define it (even if this was possible) might cause offence to some. However, it is typically a vital aspect with regard to the provision of airline sourced humanitarian assistance as covered in this information article

Of course, many millions of persons in the world have no religion at all - in the typical understanding of the subject - but they will nevertheless all have culture, customs, traditions & ethics

Concept Used

Ignoring Turkish Airlines (which flew to around 130 of the approximately 195 countries in the world as at 2017) - the *average* number of countries flown to (by the next top nine airlines in the world [by number of countries operated to]) is about 70

So we can safely say that the vast majority of the world's airlines each operate to *less than* 70 countries

Consequently, it would also be reasonable to state that if an airline prepared information on religion, culture, custom etc. for use in better providing its humanitarian assistance type services (as related to a catastrophic aircraft accident type scenario) - the number of separate countries to consider would be 70 or less - and for most airlines *significantly less* than 70 countries

Therefore, the concept as used herein (which is far from new in the airline world [at least as a concept if not reality]) is to state that it is not unreasonable for every airline (generally speaking) in the world to research, prepare and maintain a database (by each country operated to) with regard to associated religion, culture, custom etc.

This database would be used as part of the airline's humanitarian assistance type planning and actual response to a catastrophic aircraft accident type situation, in any particular country on the airline's route network

Note - it would be far better if organisations such as the International Civil Aviation Organisation (**ICAO** - a major department of the United Nations) and / or the International Air Transport Association (**IATA**) did this research centrally and distributed the details to their countries and / or members respectively

However, it is extremely unlikely (impossible actually) that this is going to happen anytime soon!

Unfortunately, as at 2019 very few of the world's airlines would seem to have adopted the concept shown a little further above and, of those that have, it is possible that many such resulting databases / equivalents are unfit for purpose e.g. because they were not prepared adequately enough in the first place; because they have not been adequately maintained etc.

On the basis that it is never too late to start, it is strongly recommended that airlines which have no such database (and also airlines which *do* have databases but where it is felt that same might be unfit for purpose - for whatever reason) should resource, research and prepare same without delay.

Thereafter, the database should be maintained / updated on a regular basis