

AsMA Resolution 2025

Title of Resolution: Integrating a Program of Mental Health and Wellness into Safety Management Systems Across Aviation

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WHEREAS The Germanwings disaster in 2015 as well as the Malaysia flight disaster brought pilot mental health issues to the forefront and demonstrated how existing regulatory requirements and safety culture barriers may not be sufficient. Following Germanwings, two work groups were formed to address the concerns (FAA chartered an Aviation Rulemaking Committee ARC, 2015, November 18, *Pilot fitness aviation rulemaking committee report* as did the European Aviation Safety Agency and EASA, 2016 European Aviation Safety Agency Opinion No 14/2016 TE.RPRO.00036-004).

WHEREAS The World Health Organization (WHO, 2017a) revealed that the prevalence of anxiety (3.6%) and depressive (4.4%) disorders has increased from 2005-2015 worldwide and recent surveys (2016-2021) of aviation personnel have demonstrated that the symptoms and levels of depression and anxiety are similar to or above those in the general population (See Wu, et al. 2016, Cahill, et al. 2018, 2021a, 2021b, & 2022; and Venus & grosse Holtforth (2022).

WHEREAS Job demands such as risks, hazards, and complexity (psychosocial stressors) can impair employees' mental health, wellbeing, engagement, safety outcomes, as well as impacting economic costs; while job resources (support, feedback, rewards) have a positive influence (See Cox, Griffiths, & Rial-Gonzalez - *Research on Work Related Stress*, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work 2000, *Calculating the cost of work-related stress and psychosocial risks*, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, (2014) and Nahrgang, Morgeson, & Hofmann, 2011).

WHEREAS The WHO classified burnout as an occupational phenomenon that arises from chronic workplace stress that has not been managed successfully. Common features of burnout include exhaustion, cynicism, alienation, and a sense of ineffectiveness. Maslach & Leiter (2022) illustrate how it can best be addressed by modifying the poor alignment between the job and the individual (work overload, lack of control, insufficient rewards, breakdown of community, absence of fairness, and value conflicts). Studies involving commercial pilots found that 37-40% have significant levels of burnout (Fanjoy, Harriman, & DeMik, 2010, and Demerouti, Veldhuis, Coombes & Hunter, 2009).

WHEREAS The Centers for Disease Control/National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health's —Total Worker Health Program provides an integrated effort to protect employees from safety and health hazards in the workplace (Tamers et al. 2019). As part of that effort, Chari et al. (2018) describe a 5-dimension model for employee well-being that focuses efforts on the work context and beyond (workplace physical environment and safety climate, work evaluation and experience, workplace policies and culture, health status, and home community and society). Aspects of an organization's climate/culture are critical elements of a Safety Management

System (SMS). Pinsky et al. (2020) provide an overview of how the risks and regulatory issues are addressed as part of an aerospace safety culture.

WHEREAS There is sufficient evidence that job stresses and burnout represent challenges to employee mental health, well-being, job performance, and workplace safety (see above), aviation organizations need to identify and modify the aspects of the work environment/culture that generate the stress and associated risks and provide additional support for employees through peer support groups and clinically proven interventions.

WHEREAS Recent data have demonstrated that 56.1% of US and 55% of Canadian pilots have reported a history of healthcare avoidance due to fear for loss of flying status (Hoffman et al. 2022, Hoffman et al 2023). For this reason, some have argued that a proportion of pilots and other safety sensitive personnel face a barrier to seeking care due to what a change in health status might mean for their operational status, further contributing to burnout, stress, and mental health symptoms (Hoffman et al, 2022). In December 2023 the FAA chartered the Mental Health and Aviation Medical Clearances Aviation Rulemaking Committee that is designed 'to discuss and provide recommendations to the FAA that break down the barriers that prevent pilots from reporting and seeking care for mental health issues.'

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that AsMA recommend that ICAO and member states require that aviation organizations incorporate an integrated program of health and wellness as part of their SMS programs that identifies hazards associated with workload stressors and implements efforts to control the associated hazards. Organizational privacy and protection of individual data relevant to enrollment in mental health programs should be a priority.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, that AsMA encourages aviation organizations to promote peer support programs (PSP) and interventions for personnel that are tailored to the unique needs, stressors, and functions of their duties and that minimize any negative occupational, financial, and social consequences of addressing mental health/wellbeing issues.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, that systematic investment is made to address the research gaps identified by the AsMA Mental Health Research Working Sub Group to include validating tools to assess when the level of stress, wellbeing, or mental health concerns are at a level that compromises an employee's ability to perform safely in the workplace.

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*This is not an exhaustive list, merely a selected list of references that support the WHEREAS statements.