



Sent via fax, e-mail and mail

April 27, 2009

Dr. Fred Tilton
Federal Air Surgeon
Federal Aviation Administration
Office of Aviation Medicine
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

RE: Request for emergency order to address risk of swine flu transmission on aircraft.

Dear Dr. Tilton:

As you will know, the Acting Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced yesterday that a public health emergency exists nationwide involving swine influenza A (H1N1) that affects, or has significant potential to affect, national security. In light of this emerging swine flu pandemic, I am writing to you to formally request that the FAA issue an emergency order to all U.S. carriers.

In light of what we have seen with the spread of SARS on commercial flights, the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO (AFA-CWA) is concerned by the health threat to airline crewmembers, passengers, and the public at-large that is posed by swine flu, not to mention the economic threat to airlines. We are particularly concerned for our members who must work either on flights to affected areas or on connecting flights.

Some countries have issued travel advisories, recommending that passengers planning elective or non-essential travel to affected areas postpone their trips until further notice. This includes parts of the U.S. In turn, the US has issued a travel advisory for non-essential travel to Mexico. Flight attendants are based in affected areas and are being assigned to work on flights to affected areas. They must show up for work or risk discipline. As such, they need to be protected.

Reports indicate that viral infections can be spread in the following two ways: (1) Inhaling infected droplets that are airborne; and (2) Touching infected objects (such as a cup, meal tray, or seatback) and then inadvertently transferring the infectious agents to one's mouth or eyes. In addition, flight attendants essentially assume the role of a caregiver by isolating sick passengers, as necessary. If flight attendants do assume this responsibility, then the degree of contact – and therefore the risk of disease transmission – increases.

To address these serious issues, we request that the FAA issue an emergency order as follows:

1. Require the airlines to provide flight attendants with non-latex gloves and masks that are determined appropriate protection by the CDC or the WHO, at least on flights to, from, and within at-risk areas. Flight attendants who opt not to wear said masks and gloves must not be disciplined.

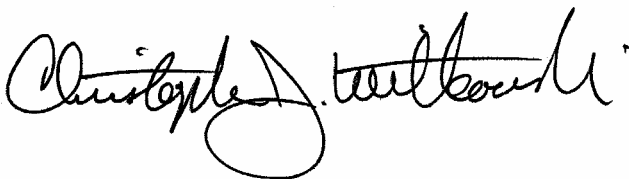


2. At the very least, require the airlines to permit flight attendants, working on flights as defined in paragraph #1 above, to wear their own masks and gloves without any discriminatory action being taken against them.
3. Require the airlines to use established methods to communicate the importance of thorough and regular hand washing, and not touching one's face, to flight attendants (e.g., via email, website, flyers, posters) and passengers (e.g., in-flight announcement).
4. Require the airlines to allow flight attendants with flu-like symptoms (including fever > 100.4°F or 38.0°C, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, or fatigue) to call in sick with no negative consequences, including such absence or absences from duty being counted against the number of total absences due to illness allowed by the company in any given period.
5. Require the airlines to develop, implement and enforce passenger-screening standards, as recommended by the WHO, CDC or the relevant national health officials.
6. Require the airlines to provide appropriate guidance to flight attendants in the event that a passenger exhibits symptoms during a flight.
7. Require that all U.S. airliners flying to Mexico have operative potable water systems, soap and sanitary towels in place for hand washing during flight operations.

We believe that the FAA Administrator has the authority to issue such an order under 49 U.S.C. 44701(a) in light of the serious threat that this outbreak poses to flight attendants and passengers on flights into and out of affected areas.

Protecting flight attendants who must work in and around potentially infected passengers will reduce the risk of disease transmission for all aircraft occupants. To this end, we urge the FAA to work closely with the WHO, CDC, the airlines and their employee unions to require – not recommend - effective proactive measures such as those outlined in our letter. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher J. Witkowski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Christopher J. Witkowski
Director, Air Safety, Health & Security Department

Cc: Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation
Lynne Osmus, Acting Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration