

Her Majesty The Queen  
Buckingham Palace  
London  
SW1A 1AA

Wednesday, 29 July 2009

Your Majesty,

Passenger Carrying Aircraft: Contaminated Cabin Air

During a debate on Air Quality (Aircraft) in Westminster Hall on 1 July 2009, Hansard copy attached, Tobias Ellwood MP said:

"Clear evidence demonstrates that there is a design fault in passenger aircraft that puts passengers and crew at risk from fumes, yet the CAA and the Government continue to allow that situation to go unchecked."

The breathing air supplied to passengers and crews on all commercial and most military transport aircraft, designed since the early 1960s, has been taken from the compression section of the engine and delivered to the passenger cabin and cockpit completely unfiltered. This air, known as 'bleed air' as it is 'bled' off the engine, can at times become contaminated with both jet engine oils and hydraulic fluids due to poor engine design, poor maintenance or system malfunction.

When the bleed air is contaminated it will contain numerous toxic and hazardous chemicals. Many of these chemicals, such as carbon monoxide, or the neurotoxic and immunotoxic organophosphate tricresyl phosphate, are odourless and colourless. This contaminated air, inhaled by passengers and crew, can then lead not only to a flight safety hazard but also to short and long term health effects. Contaminated air exposures may also be adversely affecting gene expression in those exposed or the offspring of those exposed.

Mr Maples MP and Mr Ellwood MP both asked the minister a question on 1 July which we have been asking the Government for nearly 10 years, a question that remains unanswered:

"I would also like to know what steps the Minister will take to ensure that passengers are informed when they have been exposed to a contamination event."

Aircraft regulations clearly state that:

"Each crew compartment must have enough fresh air to enable crewmembers to perform their duties without undue discomfort or fatigue"

and

"Crew and passenger compartment air must be free from harmful or hazardous concentrations of gases or vapours."

but as hazardous concentrations of gasses and vapours are not monitored onboard, no aircraft has any form of detection systems fitted, compliance to these regulations cannot possibly be ensured.

Crew and passengers, including those yet born, are not only being put at risk every day but of great concern to us is the fact that no UK airline informs its passengers when they have been exposed to contaminated air. This is clearly a breach of their basic human rights.

For ten years we have striven, without success, to make certain this Government ensure all passengers and crews are informed when they have been exposed to contaminated air.

We now earnestly seek your support in ensuring airlines are both instructed to inform all passengers and crews when they have been exposed to contaminated air and that short and long term medical surveillance and support is provided.

I also enclose a copy of a documentary film I made entitled 'Welcome Aboard Toxic Airlines.' The film was sent earlier this year to every peer and MP in the United Kingdom and continues to be broadcast internationally.

Yours sincerely,

Captain Tristan Loraine  
Co-Chairman GCAQE