

Information

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RENEWED ASH MENACE TO AIR TRAVEL

Decisions to disrupt air traffic must be backed by best possible science, say airlines

The Association of European Airlines, which brings together Europe's most important network carriers, has reacted to the new threat from the Icelandic volcanic ash cloud with a call for renewed efforts to determine the true nature of the risks involved. The European mainland is again impacted by volcanic ash, as operations on the North Atlantic and Northern Spain were affected.

"Absolute safety must be the watchword", said AEA Secretary General Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus, "but for the sake of European passengers and businesses the disruption must be kept to a minimum, commensurate with 100% safety". Current procedures for defining the areas of risk have been modified, he said, with the consequence that if the concentration levels of ash are not considered to be too high, flights are possible, but with restrictions so as to permit additional precautions which ensure absolute safety of the flights.

"There are still several areas of imprecision", said the AEA Secretary General, "all urgently needing to be refined. But for the time being, the current provisions must at least be clarified and implemented consistently and coherently so that airlines and passengers are not confronted with different interpretations in each country. Key is that, whatever decisions are taken, they are based upon verified and verifiable data."

Mr Schulte-Strathaus went on to seek further test and verification flights from governments and researchers "to be sure we are not only talking about random samples and computer simulations".

- Adria Airways
- Aegean Airlines
- Aer Lingus
- AeroSvit
- airBaltic
- Air France
- Air Malta
- Alitalia
- Austrian
- bmi
- British Airways
- brussels airlines
- Cargolux
- Croatia Airlines
- Cyprus Airways
- Czech Airlines
- DHL
- Finnair
- Iberia
- Icelandair
- Jat Airways
- KLM
- LOT
- Lufthansa
- Luxair
- Malev
- Montenegro Airlines
- Olympic Air
- SAS Scandinavian Airlines
- SWISS
- TAP Portugal
- TAROM
- TNT Airways
- Turkish Airlines
- Ukraine International Airlines
- Virgin Atlantic Airways

Finally, he said, it is high time that EASA, the European Safety Agency, offered technical assistance. "This is, after all, primarily a safety issue." He said that AEA calls upon EASA to deliver further substantiating material for the decision-makers, and that there was still a lack of scientifically confirmed clarity about the ash concentration levels at which safety becomes an issue. "Show us where the true danger is, and we will avoid it" said the Secretary General, "but please demonstrate to us that decisions which damage our livelihood are being taken with the most rigorous empirical science".

For further information, please contact:

David Henderson

Manager Information

Phone : +32(0) 2 639 89 72

Email: david.henderson@aea.be

www.aea.be

Note to the Editor: The Association of European Airlines (AEA) brings together 36 European established scheduled network carriers. These collectively carry 347 million passengers and 6 million tonnes of cargo each year, operating 2,160 aircraft serving 662 destinations in 162 countries with 11,400 flights a day. They provide around 385,000 jobs directly, and generate a total turnover of €70 billion