Airline Family Assistance Planning

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A Medium to Long Term Process

• Why did this happen?
• How did this happen?
• What learnings do we take from this?
• How do we prevent a recurrence?

Answers to above are required for:

• Survivors
• Families of survivors and dead.
• Wider aviation industry
• Public interest
Family Assistance

Immediate Requirement for Information

• Was my loved one involved?
• Where is my loved one?
• Are they alive, injured or dead?
• How can you help me?
  Logistics
  Financial
  Mental
• Where are their belongings?
• Why and how did this happen? (facts v speculation)

Medium Term

• Why and how did this happen? (fact based)
• Who is responsible? Culpable?
• How can a recurrence be prevented
What is Family Assistance?

This can take many different forms:

- Accurate information
- Travel and Hotel arrangements
- Food and beverages
- Financial Assistance
- Someone to listen to.
- Someone to shout at
- Someone to be there
- Someone to take charge
- A secure location to grieve
- Recovery/return of personal effects
- Assistance with funeral arrangements.
- A Memorial
- Dispelling rumours
- Facilitation of a site visit
- Spiritual Care
- Mental Health Counselling
- Child Care
- Antemortem Interviews
- Toiletries
- Locksmith
- Investigation Updates
- Recovery/Repatriation
- Explanation of process
- A shoulder to cry on
Family Assistance - Limitations

Family Assistance programmes however comprehensive are unlikely to meet everyone’s individual needs, but best endeavors should be made as far as is reasonably practical.

May be Unsuccessful in Providing:

• All the answers to all the questions.
• Support for all individual needs
  Cultural
  Religious
  Personal
• Elimination of legal action.
• Closure for those involved.
Why do Airlines Provide Family Assistance?

- In the aftermath of an aircraft accident airlines must meet their obligations:

  - **Legal** - Requirement to comply with applicable international and state law and regulations with regards to Family Assistance.

  - **Financial** - Requirement to pay any monies as required by applicable state law and regulation to victims and their families.

  - **Moral** - It’s the right thing to do.

- Doing the ‘right thing’ by caring and providing support to persons directly affected will also minimise damage to reputation and brand.
Brand Reputation

- Irrespective of who is seen to be at fault in the aftermath of a major incident, the reputation of your brand is damaged and is now highly vulnerable to what happens next.
- How you are seen publicly to respond to the incident and how supportive you are of persons directly affected will be a major contributor as to whether your brand and ultimately your organisation survives post event.
- Many examples of airlines who have not done this well and paid the ultimate price:
  - TWA and US government heavily criticized in aftermath of TWA 800.
  - Families complained of no support, facilities, recognition of their needs etc.
  - Families drafted a bill of needs and raised issue with President Bill Clinton.
  - Actions of families ultimately led to development and formalization of US Family Assistance Regulations.
  - TWA brand seriously damaged by public perception of lack of care.
  - TWA went bankrupt and were absorbed by American Airlines.

Flight TWA 800
17th July 1996
230 Fatalities
'If you keep the people most affected in the forefront of your mind with every strategic, tactical or communications decision you make, you will be doing the right thing, which in turn will take care of your organization’s future.'

'Ask yourself – If this was my family, what would they need?'
Family Assistance Regulation - ICAO

- **ICAO Policy (Doc 9998)**
  - Approved March 2013
  - Contracted states should consider national legislation, regulations and/or policies to ensure that the necessary resources and commitment to provide assistance are available.

- **ICAO Manual (Doc 9973)**
  - Published December 2013
  - Contains guidance to assist States in implementing policies.
  - Enables States to prepare a plan, providing guidance on:
    - Defining recipients of family assistance
    - What types of family assistance should be provided
    - When to provide family assistance
    - Suggested family assistance providers
    - Duration of assistance
    - Preparation of family assistance plan
Examples of International Family Assistance Legislation

- **Europe**: Investigation and Prevention of Accidents and Incidents in Civil Aviation (2010)
- **USA**: Air Carrier Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Plan (1996)
- **Brazil**: Assistance Plan for Aeronautical Accident Victims and Support to their Families (2005)
- **South Korea**: Plans for Assistance in Case of Aircraft Accidents (2006)
- **Japan**: Japanese Transportation Safety Board and Ministry of Land Infrastructure and Tourism (2012)
- **United Arab Emirates**: Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Planning (2018)
- **Australia**: Family Assistance Code
UAE Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Planning

-Introduced June 2018
-Requires all UAE Air Transport Operators to have a Family Assistance Plan.
-Outlines minimum requirements and obligations which all UAE Air Transport Operators must follow, in relation to the provision of Family Assistance following an Airline Accident.
Victim and Family Member Flow in Aftermath of an Accident

Key
- Victim
- Family Member

Accident Site → Triage → Hospital → Survivors Reception Centre → Family Assistance Centre → Friends and Relatives Reception Centre → Reunion Facility → Home
Airline Family Assistance Provision – Immediate/24-36 Hours

Key
- Immediate Care Teams (Airlines/Authorities).
- Airline Family Assistance Team
- Victim
- Family Member

Accident Site
Triage
Hospital
Mortuary
Survivors Reception Centre
Friend and Relatives Reception Centre
Reunion Facility
Family Assistance Centre
Home
Airline Family Assistance Provision – Day 2/3 to 3 weeks+

Key
- Immediate Care Teams (Airlines/Authorities).
- Airline Family Assistance Team
- Victim
- Family Member
Family Assistance Centre (FAC)

What is a Family Assistance Centre?

- Centre of airlines local response post accident. Airline is usually responsible for FAC.
- Centralised location for relatives, friends and casualties seeking information during the recovery phase.
- FAC may be part of a larger multi agency operations response centre e.g. USA - JFSOC.
- Usually established within 24 hours, allowing airport operations to return to BAU.
- Typically a Hotel with good conferencing facilities close to airport/location of incident. Families may not necessarily stay here.
- Depending on geographical spread of families, airlines may initially set up FACs in.

What Services are Provided Here?

- Private safe and secure location for family members and accident survivors.
- Crisis and grief counselling
- Official family briefings (factual information)
- Collection of ante mortem information
- Lodging, meals and beverages
- Financial assistance
- Transportation
- Child Care
- Spiritual care/Religious services
- Health services
- Death notifications (in some States)
- Other services deemed necessary.
Global Reach of a Family Assistance Plan
Family Assistance – Additional Elements

- Manifest Verification
- Co-ordination and release of information to appropriate authorities.
- Emergency Telephone Enquiry Call Centres – Toll Free Numbers.
- Dark Site
- Collection of Emergency Contact Information Pre Travel
- Provision of immediate financial assistance
- Transportation and Logistics.
- Visas
- Etc.
Family Assistance – Medium/Long Term

- Medical re-patriation to home countries of those with long term injuries.
- Re-patriation of human remains
- Re-patriation of personnel effects
- Information with regards to investigation.
- One year and subsequent year anniversary acknowledgement (memorial services etc)
- Monument
- Financial Settlements

Family Assistance can continue for a significant amount of time post event.
Etihad’s Approach to Family Assistance

- Full endorsement by Senior Executives within the business.
- Full time Family Assistance Manager as part of Emergency Response Planning Department.
- Approved Family Assistance Plan to meet legal requirements of GCAA Family Assistance Regulations, but also Family Assistance regulations of all other states where we operate.
- Investment in latest Incident Management Software to assist in effective management of an event and associated victims and families if required.
- Humanitarian Support provided by a 500+ team of trained volunteers from within the business (Special Assistance Team).
- Comprehensive documented process and procedures for initial activation and subsequent response to a major accident/incident.
- Ability to provide Family Assistance both in UAE and Worldwide as required.
Recruitment

• Departmental KPI to maintain volunteer numbers above required levels. Numbers constantly monitored.

• Regular high profile, targeted recruitment campaigns run within the organization.

• Endorsement of all recruitment activities with visibility of the Group CEO in order to highlight importance and company recognition of volunteers.

• Campaigns supported by literature, information videos etc.

• Suitability of volunteers assessed during training for Family Assistance Roles to build appropriate team structure:

  e.g. Team Leaders/General Member
  Passenger/Family facing ‘Back of House’ logistics
Training and Exercising

Training:

• Two day initial course and assessment.
• One day recurrent course every two years.

Exercising and Testing:

• Quarterly table top exercises held on specific elements of Family Assistance Plan
• Quarterly Corporate ERP Command Room Exercises which includes elements of Family Assistance.
• One full scale exercise per annum to exercise full activation of Special Assistance Team and a Family Assistance Centre.
Who Can Assist Airlines in the Provision of Family Assistance?

Crisis/Disaster Management Companies

- Airlines are unlikely to have the resource and capability to fulfill all obligations of an effective and appropriate family assistance plan.

- Some tasks require skill sets unlikely to be found in airline core workforce:
  
  e.g. Disaster Victim Identification,
       Trauma Counselling
       Cleansing and sanitation of personnel effects etc.

- Many Airlines hold retainer contracts with specialist Crisis Management Companies to support them in the aftermath of a major incident.

- Services typically include:

  - Disaster Victim Identification (if/where required).
  - Provision of additional resources on site and at HQ.
  - Expert Advice and Guidance on response.
  - Repatriation of human remains and personnel effects.
  - Medical evacuations
  - Call Centre services