



BANK CHIEF'S WARNING OF HOME LOAN RATE MISERY

SEE PAGE 2



Britain is enchanted by Madame Sarkozy

SEE PAGES 263



ELEGANT: Mme Carla Sarkozy, new wife of the French President, arrives for a state banquet at Windsor Castle last night

SCANDAL OF TOXIC FUMES IN ALL JETS

By Polly Buchanan and John Ingham

THOUSANDS of plane passengers and cabin crew staff are being put at risk from toxic fumes pumped into aircraft, it was claimed today.

The contaminated air can cause breathing problems, nausea and fatigue while long-term exposure may even lead to brain damage, a new report says.

The air is pumped directly from jet engines to the cabins on every plane without being filtered and is known as "bleed air". Some pilots have complained

of being "completely incapacitated" by the fumes. Critics say filter systems are available but that airlines are reluctant to meet the costs of fitting them.

MPs from all political parties are now calling for an urgent public inquiry into the effects of bleed air.

Shadow Transport Minister Julian Brazier said: "It's pretty scary to think a pilot could be brain damaged or permanently incapacitated by these fumes while accountable for the lives of so many on

TURN TO PAGE 5

Picture: Carl de Souza/PA Wire

'Toxic fumes pumped into cabins of planes'

FROM PAGE ONE

his aircraft. If even one plane goes down because of this, it's a tragedy that could have been avoidable.

"Boeing recently took the decision that they will have a different air feed system to the one currently in operation on any new designs. The fact that the world's biggest aircraft manufacturer has taken this decision shows there's a real issue here."

And Liberal Democrat transport spokesman Norman Baker urged the Government not to wait for a "disaster" to happen before taking action.

The Global Cabin Air Quality Executive, which represents more than 500,000 aviation workers, outlined the shocking scale of the problem in its latest report.

Captain Tristan Lorraine, a former pilot with 20 years experience and co-chairman of GCAQE, accused international airlines of "presiding over a global scandal".

He said: "They don't tell the public there is a risk of exposure or when they have been exposed. This has to be a breach of their human rights."

"Each year thousands of contaminated air events go unreported. The Civil Aviation Authority and the Department of Transport have negligently failed to protect the travelling public."

The Government claims only one in 200 flights are affected but

Air 'should be filtered'

JET design exposes airline crew and passengers to contaminated air.

Some of the air is taken from deep in the engines - where it can be contaminated by hazardous chemicals in oils and hydraulic fluids - and is then passed into the cabin.

This "bleed" air is needed as a life support system at high altitude. But campaigners say it is passed into the cabin unfiltered and can contain carbon monoxide.



NOT SITTING PRETTY: Cabin air can be contaminated by hazardous chemicals

GCAQE say chemicals from oils and lubricants leak into cabin air supplies daily.

Susan Michaelis, head of research at GCAQE, said: "People can be affected from a one-off flight or as a result of repeated flights."

"In the short-term you may suffer things like breathing difficulties, headaches, fatigue and respiratory problems. In the long-term it can cause problems in the central nervous and neurological systems."

"Blood tests on some exposed

pilots show cell death in the brain, which is effectively brain damage. We have found these chemicals in crew's blood and on the walls of the flight deck as well as in the air in cabins."

She said that because air contamination was so common, only three to four per cent of cases were ever reported. But where pilots had detected contaminated air, 32 per cent said it had left them impaired up to the point of being completely incapacitated.

Ms Michaelis added: "There is no

airline using a filter for this but the technology does exist. No one wants to pay for it but it is not expensive."

Green Party MEP Caroline Lucas said: "Given the huge profits raked in by the aviation sector each year, you might think that airline bosses could spare some money to invest in research and preventative measures."

Neither the Department for Transport or the Civil Aviation Authority were available for comment yesterday.

Another tax to hit motorists

MOTORISTS face yet another new tax under controversial plans for local road pricing.

This will be on top of the £42 billion they already pay every year.

It triggered Opposition claims that people could be priced off the roads through another stealth tax.

Transport Minister Rosie Winterton was pushing new powers for councils to introduce their own schemes to cut congestion during the Second Reading of the Local Transport Bill in the Commons yesterday.

She admitted to MPs that there would be no way of offsetting existing motoring taxes - like fuel and vehicle excise duty - to soften the impact of local road pricing.

Tory transport spokesman Theresa Villiers accused Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly of "trying to have her cake and eat it".

She said: "On the one hand she is trying to bully councils into bringing in local road pricing in order to get transport funding."

"On the other hand she is trying to dodge the political flak by leaving town halls to carry the can for introducing these schemes."

Last year a record 1.8 million people signed a petition on the Downing Street website opposing road pricing.