



Air Contamination and the IPA featured on TV News

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You will be aware that 18 months ago the IPA embarked on the Cabin Air Quality awareness campaign and no doubt you may have been wondering what has been happening of late as little has been mentioned here in Skypointer. Well, I can report that far from nothing happening we have in fact been working away behind the scenes and this activity reached a head recently culminating in our appearance on Sky News and Channel 5 News at the beginning of March.

To recap, there is a phenomenon whereby the bleed air supply for air conditioning can be contaminated by pyrolysed (chemically decomposed due to heat) synthetic jet engine oil that contains ortho-isomers of Tri-Cresyl-Phosphate (TCP), an organophosphate (OP) that is known to cause both short-term and long-term neurological effects similar to those experienced by farmers affected by sheep dipping a number of years ago.

So what have we been doing over the last few months?

Towards the end of 2005 we became aware that a newly formed House of Commons Transport Select Committee was to look at the work of the Civil Aviation Authority. The Association prepared a submission in which we stated our belief that the CAA was not accepting the seriousness of the issue of Cabin Air Quality and that the small amount of research that they had conducted had not considered the most toxic ortho-isomers of TCP or the long-term health effects. The committee has been hearing evidence and its report is awaited.

At the same time I was introduced to The Countess of Mar who sits in the House of Lords on the cross-benches (not aligned to any political party). Her background is in farming and she herself was affected by OP poisoning because of sheep dipping and knowing full well the effects of such poisoning, has been campaigning the cause of aircraft cabin air quality. The 'Civil Aviation Bill' is currently passing through Parliament and the Countess proposed an amendment that would set up an independent body responsible for monitoring the health care of passengers, crew and anybody involved in aviation. The IPA offered it's support to her proposals.

Early in February '06 we were approached to see if the Association would contribute to research that is proposed to be conducted by Prof. Clem Furlong at the University of Washington, Seattle, into developing a test grandly titled a 'Biomarker of Exposure'; simply put, it is a blood test to determine if an individual has been exposed to contamination. It is Prof. Furlong's belief, having conducted initial trial research, that once exposure has taken place the blood cells are 'decorated' by characteristics of the contaminant OP that could be identified at a later date with the blood test and prove that exposure to contamination had occurred.

Having considered the proposal the Directors gave a unanimous decision to support this vital piece of research and we have offered US\$5,000. At the time of writing we are the ONLY pilots representative group in the UK that has committed to the project and the expectation is that this will not change. Other groups that have committed, or are considering, financial support are the American Flight Attendants Association, Australian Federation of Air Pilots, Norwegian Federation of Oil Workers (turbine engines are used on oil platforms for electrical generation and bleed



L to R: Prof. Ralph McCready, IPA Rep on the CAA Medical Forum, Peter Jackson, IPF General Secretary and Capt. Phill Petitt, IPA Director.



air), Royal Australian Air Force, TGWU and others. The research is likely to begin in April and is expected to last six to twelve months.

Also in February, I was honoured to receive from The Countess of Mar an invitation to a private dinner at the House of Lords. Guests included Prof. Furlong and other respected medics in the field of toxicology as well as others that have an interest in the campaign for contaminant free air in aircraft cabins.

The Countess also hosted a briefing workshop titled 'Impact to Health of Exposure to Contaminated Air in Aircraft Cabins' at University College London that I attended accompanied by Ian Wrathall our General Manager. Whilst a vast majority of the medical information presented by the eminent professors was very in-depth and a struggle to follow, the opportunity to meet and talk with other like-minded people was very worthwhile.

Antony Barnett, a journalist with The Observer, was in attendance at the briefing workshop and having already been in contact with him about his proposed articles in the 26th February edition of his newspaper Ian and I spent some time discussing with him the problem of air contamination. Whilst it is good to get the problem aired in the media his articles unfortunately contained a couple of factual errors and also made no reference to the IPA and our campaign effort.

Others, too, have noticed our continued activity in this field and so it was in early March that we were asked to put forward a spokesman to be interviewed on TV along with The Countess of Mar, David Learmount of Flight International and others, stating our views regarding cabin air quality. The reason for the media interest was that the Civil Aviation Bill was having its second reading in the House of Lords on 8th March when the Countesses amendment proposing the health monitoring body would have its formal hearing.

Sky News and Channel 5 News interviewed Peter Jackson, IPA Director and IPF General Secretary, at their combined Westminster studios. Initially it had been our understanding that the story would roll on throughout the day but in fact Peter's interviews were not repeated after his live broadcasts. However, it was good to get the IPA name on national TV as part of the ongoing awareness campaign into Cabin Air Quality.

After lunch, Peter, Ian, Prof. Ralph McCready and I joined a few others as guests of the Countess in the gallery of the House of Lords to hear the debate on the reading of the Civil Aviation Bill. Although very interesting to see and hear it was rather long and after four hours we got to the point where the Countess was to make her speech proposing the health monitoring body. Personally I knew exactly what she was going to say as I had spent the previous couple of days working with the Countess on her speech contributing some of the information and proof reading the whole thing to check for factual accuracy.

Unfortunately the Countesses proposal to set up the health monitoring body was voted against by the peers, however her speech and that of Lord Tyler who spoke in her favour were very powerful and we feel that the cause has been advanced a little bit by giving the government notice that we will not go away quietly.

And so the campaigning and behind the scenes work goes on. After writing this article my very next task is to write a letter that will go to the Chairman of the CAA outlining the inconsistencies in it's approach to air contamination and cabin air quality.

Meanwhile, please remember if you experience what you believe to be a contaminated air event your first action should be to don your oxygen mask. The second action is to file an ASR/MOR and lastly copy the report as it is not unknown for them 'to go missing' before reaching the CAA MOR database.

2006 Airline Staff Youth Exchange Program

Now in it's 11th year of matching airline families with other families world-wide.

The International Youth Exchange Program for Families of Airline Employees (IYE) is currently accepting applications for world-wide, two week exchanges for airline employee family members.

Youth, ages 14 - 19 years of age are matched with youth their own age. Each youth hosts in their home for a time period of two weeks. The youth are together at both homes.

Coordinated by a retired airline employee, IYE has facilitated over 900 exchanges for airline youth since it began in 1994. Costs for the exchange: an airline pass, spending money and the application fee of \$225 (refundable if no match is found).

*For an application form or more information please Call: Camille Wheeler at: cwhee23773@aol.com
or contact: IYE, PO Box 211065, St. Paul, MN 55121-2465, USA*