
Two Pilots, One Priority: Elevating Flight Safety

NOTE

For more information on this topic, please visit www.safetystartswith2.com

Discussion surrounding new technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and autonomous vehicles in the aviation industry are advancing on many different levels. However, the central concern remains: *will increased automation and technology truly enhance industry resilience, safety, and efficiency, or will it leave us more vulnerable?*

One concept being discussed is extended Minimum Crew Operations (eMCO), which proposes removing pilots from the flight deck in favour of reliance on automation and technology. While proponents argue for its potential benefits, it is essential to consider the implications carefully. Replacing the two highly trained, properly rested pilots at the controls with more automation is not the solution. Today, human frontend operators, such as pilots, are the most reliable failsafe components in the system.

IFALPA will always insist that any new design, technology, training, and regulations prioritise safety above all else. Merely maintaining current safety standards is insufficient. eMCO and similar schemes, such as Reduced Crew Operations (RCO), **must demonstrate a higher level of safety to justify their implementation**, especially given the existing strain on the aviation system due to commercial pressures in the aftermath of the pandemic. Removing pilots from the flight deck could exacerbate this issue, **as pilots serve as the final layer of protection when systems fail**.

History has shown that all technology and systems are prone to failures. When these failures occur, it is the well-trained pilots with the appropriate skills who ensure the safety of crew and passengers.

On the surface, eMCO may appear to offer some advantages or even address some current problems, however, it will ultimately increase costs and introduce significant operational risks for operators. Instead of prioritizing technology over human expertise, we must put people first. Our singular goal is elevating flight safety. Thus, we must carefully scrutinize any new automation concepts that may reduce our focus on that singular goal.

By investing in initiatives to establish a Positive Safety Culture and ensuring a proper balance of training and practical experience for new aviators, we can continue to raise the level of safety in our industry.