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BALPA: Nearly Half Of Us Fall Asleep

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The British Airline Pilots Association, acting to oppose new less-stringent rest rules, told a Transport Select Committee that nearly half of its members already admit to falling asleep in the cockpit, but that's not all. According to BALPA, that figure is likely under-reported and, as it is, 80 percent of accidents are already due to human error. BALPA testified that new European rules could increase working-hour limits for UK commercial pilots from 16 and one-half hours to 22 hours under certain conditions. The CAA has a different take, but not as different as you might expect.



Andrew Haines, chief executive of the CAA, said that the 22 hours scenario would be "exceptionally rare." And the CAA's position is that there is no evidence that the proposed rules would put passengers at risk. BALPA says that a survey of 500 union pilots found that 43 percent had fallen asleep on the flight deck and one-third of those woke to find another pilot asleep. According to Jim McAuslan, BALPA general secretary, the new EU proposals would see UK pilots flying "further -- as far as California -- with no back-up crew," the Independent reported. And it would "allow pilots to do up to seven early starts in a row." The new rules are backed by the UK aviation minister, who is seeking uniform rules for commercial pilots in Europe.