

EU Rules For Pilot Hours Could Put Passengers At Risk, MPs Warn

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European Union rules that would allow British pilots to fly for more hours than currently allowed will put passengers in danger, MPs have warned.

At present the UK implements stricter flight time regulations than some other European countries, but under the new rules proposed by the European Aviation Safety Agency, the UK would not be able to have its own regime.

The Commons transport committee has raised concerns that the new regime could see a pilot landing a plane after 22 hours awake.

In a report published on Wednesday the committee noted that 15–20% of fatal accidents attributed to human error occur as a result of fatigue while 43% of UK pilots have reportedly fallen asleep involuntarily whilst on the flight deck.

"The proposed 11 hour duty period at night for pilots flies in the face of scientific evidence. It should be reduced to a 10 hour maximum," the MPs said.

Louise Ellman, the Labour chair of the transport committee, said fatigue is already an issue in aviation and that steps must be taken to address this.

"Current EU proposals risk making the situation worse, by lowering the UK's current standards. A lowest common denominator approach to safety will not benefit passengers, airlines or crew," she said.

Flight time limitations are important to help reduce such accidents by preventing fatigue. The regulations cover a number of variables including the number of hours worked, the time of day worked and the allocation of rest periods.

A Department for Transport spokeswoman said: "The safety of the travelling public is paramount, which is why we have been clear that we would only support Easa's final proposals if the Civil Aviation Authority is content that they provide an appropriate level of protection against crew fatigue."