

**United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on  
Transportation and Maritime Security**

**Hearing on:**

**On the Frontlines in Turbulent Times:  
Workforce Perspectives on the State of Transportation Security**

**Tuesday, November 16, 2021**

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**Livestream**



**Testimony of  
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## **Introduction**

Thank you Chair Thompson, Chair Watson Coleman, Ranking Member Katko and Ranking Member Gimenez for convening this hearing on the current threats to aviation security and the people on the frontlines who are confronting the longest sustained turbulent times in the history of our industry.

My name is Sara Nelson. I am a twenty-five year union Flight Attendant and president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO (AFA), representing Flight Attendants at 17 airlines across the industry. We also coordinate closely with leaders of the Association of Professional Flight Attendants and the Transport Workers Union, together representing nearly 100,000 flight attendants across the industry. Flight attendants are the frontline of aviation along with the passenger service agents and ground service workers represented by the Communications Workers of America and all of the affiliates of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO. The subject of this hearing is of critical importance to all aviation workers and our nation's security.

In September, our unions testified before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation regarding "Disruption in the Skies: The Surge in Air Rage and its Effects on Workers, Airlines, and Airports." Some of the testimony we provide today echoes issues and proposed solutions raised in that hearing, and updates where we have them. But today our focus is specific to aviation security and the oversight of this subcommittee. There is no doubt this issue is of paramount concern and requires all of us - federal and private sector workers, airlines, airports, regulators, and lawmakers to act with coordinated urgency across aviation to subdue this threat to aviation safety and security.

## **High Rate of Disruptive Passengers Risk Missed Cues of Coordinated Attack**

We are on track to log more incidents of disruptive airline passengers in 2021 than we have seen in the history of aviation. While the number of bad actors is relatively small, the incidents of disruptions have been so pervasive Flight Attendants wonder every morning they put on their uniform whether it will be a sign of leadership and authority in the cabin to keep everyone safe, or a target for a violent attack. The frequency of events have led some in the media to refer to the disruptive outbursts and violent behavior as a "new normal." That is something we simply cannot accept for our safety and security.

Flight attendants are aviation's first responders, charged with the safety and health of passengers and crew. For the past twenty years, since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Flight Attendants have served as the last line of defense in aviation security. We know there are two fundamentals in aviation safety and security: 1) remove all distractions from safety sensitive work, and 2) leave all threats to safety and security on the ground.

The threat of a terrorist attack has not abated, but our vigilance and coordinated actions across government and aviation stakeholders has to date thwarted any planned attacks. If we allow disruptions in the cabin or distractions due to defiance of passengers to comply with crew instructions to become a regular occurrence, we are in jeopardy of missing cues of a coordinated attack. Every level of threat requires vigilance and scrutiny. We cannot be lulled into a place of accepting these distractions as a new normal.

### **AFA Survey Results: 85% of Flight Attendants Have Experienced an Unruly Passenger Event in 2021**

On July 29, 2021, our union released<sup>1</sup> the results of a survey of nearly 5,000 Flight Attendants across 30 airlines between June 25, 2021 and July 14, 2021. Key findings included:

- 85 percent of all respondents had dealt with unruly passengers in the first half of 2021.
- 58 percent had experienced at least five incidents during that time.
- 17 percent, or nearly 1 in 5 respondents, reported experiencing a physical incident.
- 71 percent of Flight Attendants who filed incident reports with airline management received no follow-up.
- 50 percent reported witnessing misconduct during boarding, and 13 percent reported behavior beginning in the gate area.
- 58 percent of respondents reported alcohol contributed to disruptive events and 85 percent of incidents were related to mask compliance.
- 61 percent of respondents reported that disruptive passengers used racist, sexist and/or homophobic slurs during incidents. Many specific examples were provided, most of which were too offensive to repeat.
- Only 60 percent of respondents experiencing a physical incident onboard said law enforcement was requested to meet their flight.

When asked what they believed to be the cause or escalating reasons for the unruly behavior, Flight Attendants cited that mask compliance, alcohol, routine safety reminders, flight delays and cancellations were all common factors in unruly passenger interactions. Many cited multiple factors contributed to incidents, which also implies a compounding effect and an opportunity to reduce incidents..

Flight attendants reported facing extensive verbal abuse, including from visibly drunk passengers, passengers yelling and swearing in response to masking directions, and often aggressively challenging flight crew working to ensure compliance with federal rules. Many respondents recounted aggressive incidents, including shoving, kicking seats, throwing trash at flight crew, defiling the restroom in response to crewmember instructions, and following flight crew through the airport to continue yelling and harassment.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.afacwa.org/unruly\\_passengers\\_survey](https://www.afacwa.org/unruly_passengers_survey)

Racist, sexist, and homophobic abuse of flight crews creates a hostile environment for everyone onboard, violates federal law, and undermines the authority of those charged with keeping order for a safe flight. It has no place anywhere, and certainly not in a workplace environment.

Aviation security is at risk when crew are deterred from or delayed in performing safety and security duties.

According to the survey results, nearly half of the incidents could be prevented by identifying problems on the ground or preflight - which is an opportunity for dramatically reducing the threat in the air. The survey also indicates room for significant improvement in the area of response to incidents and enforcement.

### **Addressing Violence and Disrespect Toward Ground Service Workers Will Reduce Inflight Events as Well**

Ground service agents are experiencing an increased amount of passenger rage and their experiences are going unrecognized. These incidents vary from using crass and vulgar language when addressing employees, using racial epithets that cause psychological harm to our agents, to punching, biting, kicking, shoving and even spitting on them. These incidents are caused by overlapping operational challenges like staffing shortages, flight delays and cancellations and enforcing federal mask mandates at the gates. CWA represents 20,000 agents working for American Airlines and at wholly-own regional subsidiaries, Piedmont Airlines and Envoy Air, who have serious concerns about their safety in the workplace. They are looking to Congress and this administration for action that shows the safety of ground service workers is a priority.

### **Action by Government and Airlines Has Made a Difference - But More is Needed**

It is a violation of federal law to interfere or disrupt the duties of a crewmember. Federal Aviation Regulations 91.11, 121.580 and 135.120 state that "no person may assault, threaten, intimidate, or interfere with a crewmember in the performance of the crewmember's duties aboard an aircraft being operated." In addition, 49 U.S. Code § 46504 states that "An individual on an aircraft in the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States who, by assaulting or intimidating a flight crew member or Flight Attendant of the aircraft, interferes with the performance of the duties of the member or attendant or lessens the ability of the member or attendant to perform those duties, or attempts or conspires to do such an act, shall be fined under title 18, imprisoned for not more than 20 years, or both. However, if a dangerous weapon is used in assaulting or intimidating the member or attendant, the individual shall be imprisoned for any term of years or for life." Violations of the FAA regulation carry up to \$35,000 in fines for each incident, and if convicted under the statute, up to twenty years in prison. While FAA investigations and fines levied are important, our experience is that public criminal prosecution serves as the most effective deterrent to potential aggressors. President Biden's instruction to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to "deal with the violence on aircraft" in early October led to swift action to

prosecute a violent passenger who punched a Flight Attendant in the face on an American Airlines flight only a few weeks later.

FAA Administrator Steve Dickson and the entire agency have been relentless about communicating the seriousness of air rage incidents, working with airlines, airports and unions to push for solutions that remove these threats, distractions, and serious safety concerns from aviation. On November 4th, the FAA referred 37 of the most violent, physical assaults against crewmembers and passengers to the Department of Justice for federal prosecution. We need the DOJ to act quickly on these incidents that have already been fully investigated by the FAA. This is the most effective way to deter bad actors and put a stop to the spike in disruptive passengers.

One note on the referral of FAA reports - the investigation of these reports must be concluded before the agency can refer them to the DOJ. This is not the only way the DOJ can begin prosecution. A more streamlined process is an FBI investigation. We need to ensure procedures are clear on referral to the FBI at the time of the event, and that airlines are communicating to crews the importance of filing reports, as well as providing emotional and legal support for the affected crewmembers. Action is needed by Congress to extend concurrent jurisdiction to the FBI for incidents that occur when the airplane door is open.

### **Centralized List of Violators - Deny Right to Fly**

Airlines have individually taken action to ban bad actors from future flights. For example, United Airlines has banned over 1,000 travelers due to issues related to mask mandates and unruly behavior. The airline has instructed Flight Attendants to hand out cards to maskless passengers that inform them, "you're just going to be banned from flying United Airlines if you don't put [a mask] on." We believe this has been an effective way to deescalate a number of incidents involving disruptive passengers. However, when incidents escalate to violence it is critical the perpetrators face swift and thorough consequences.

We need government action to create a centralized list of violators who will be denied the freedom of flight on all airlines. If a passenger physically assaults crewmembers, gate agents, or other passengers on one airline, they pose a risk to passengers and crew at every airline. This should also include any assault on a Transportation Security Officer as well. Violent offenders should be banned from flying on all airlines without delay.

We have a shared responsibility to address threats to aviation safety. Everyone involved in air travel, from federal officials to airlines, to airport concessions must play a role in ending this scourge of abusive passengers. Together we can improve communication to passengers that misconduct is dangerous, illegal, and will result in passengers losing the privilege to fly.

## **Clear Communication on Rules and Consequences are Key**

We need everyone from the door of the airport to the flight deck, control towers, concessionaires, airport workers, security, law enforcement, and travelers themselves to identify their part in helping promote calm, kindness, and above all - safety and security. More airport signage, airport PSAs, and notifications from the airline - starting when passengers purchase the tickets all the way up until boarding - should all be enhanced communication measures to reinforce the 'zero-tolerance' policy, the fines/jail time consequences, and the rules associated with alcohol consumption.

## **Severe Staffing Issues Exacerbated by Disruptive Passengers**

Flight Attendants and other frontline workers are exhausted. COVID-19 has turned schedule forecasting on its head. There's so much uncertainty in demand that airlines are planning schedules much closer to the actual flights than they typically would, and we are seeing the results in disrupted operations.

Operational disruptions and flight cancellations have exacerbated tense conditions in the airport and on planes. These issues were created pre-pandemic by increasing "productivity" and scheduling the operation by counting on a lot of overtime hours. In the wake of COVID-19, uncertainty of scheduling, and stress at work, people are simply not able to work as many overtime hours.

Airline bankruptcies in the wake of September 11th led to deep cuts to union contracts and a push for more productivity. The result was cutting pay, but increasing overtime hours to the point that one worker (with the exception of pilot duty and rest rules with flight time maximums) covered flight hours or airport gates for every two scheduled prior to September 11, 2001. Airlines became accustomed to planning staffing based on voluntary overtime hours. The hostile work environment - sometimes caused by frustration with flight cancellations and delays - is a deterrent to workers picking up additional hours or trips. One feeds off the other and increases the problem.

Further, across the industry as the focus was on cost cutting, airlines reduced staffing levels to FAA minimums. This means there are fewer Flight Attendants per passenger and fewer frontline workers in the airports who are able to answer questions, identify problems early in order to de-escalate, or simply have backup from other workers when issues get out of hand or require physical restraint and a law enforcement response. Regional airlines are reporting a couple of aggressive passenger incidents per week and often there is a single Flight Attendant to face unhinged rages.

## **Payroll Support Program (PSP) Relief Was Critical**

No one should question the effectiveness of the relief provided to airlines in order to keep workers in our jobs, connected to our healthcare, and qualified to work. We thank Congress once again for enacting the Payroll Support Program (PSP) that kept aviation workers on the job

for 16 months during the most severe impact of COVID-19 on the industry. If it were not for this program the industry would not have been able to meet return demand in any way and the millions of jobs supported by aviation would have been lost too. The economic impact of PSP helped workers and companies beyond the direct grant recipients. We recently received this message about a company in south Florida that was able to survive, maintain 850 jobs, and be in a position to hire more employees today simply because aviation worker payroll was maintained.

*"I just wanted to thank you on behalf of all of the families, including mine, that you impacted for the better across Aviation over the past two years... I profoundly remember sitting in our boardroom on March 10, 2020 talking about very difficult choices that we needed to make just to survive until the next month given the new and unforeseeable reality we faced. We had been in business for 2 decades and literally overnight we were confronted with what seemed to be an insurmountable task to survive Covid 19 impacts on global Aviation. As words such as shelter in place started to become common lingo the prospects for our industry and the millions of jobs tied to it seemed bleak to say the least. A long story short, due to people like you fighting on behalf of all of us and our families we have emerged stronger than ever and with more jobs and better salaries for our entire team. Thank you on behalf of all the ancillary businesses and the millions of dependents that you fought for in the darkest hours."*

Maintaining jobs, certification and security credentials puts us in a stronger position to address today's aviation security issues.

### **Increase Staffing, Increase Pay, Ensure Proper Rest**

In the midst of uncertainty, airline management should plan schedules with more staffing and reserves from the start, to avoid some of the issues we've seen over the last few months. Staffing up will require hiring, which takes time. Depending upon the position, hiring takes anywhere from two to six months at a minimum - and will not serve as the only solution for this holiday season. In the meantime, negotiating staffing incentive programs with significantly increased pay like the one recently announced at American Airlines and its wholly-owned regional carriers is a step in the right direction. The United Airlines Flight Attendant contract also has significant incentive pay as a tool for staffing when there are critical shortages.

The inability to increase staffing prior to the holidays is why stopping the disruptive and violent incidents is so critical. Coordination between government, airports, and airlines can increase the effectiveness of current resources as everyone in the aviation ecosystem understands their role in stopping these events before they start.

Current conditions and staffing shortages increase the urgency for the FAA and DOT to implement the Flight Attendant rest rules mandated by Congress in 2018.

## **Failure to Communicate to Passengers about Rules and Penalties**

After 9/11, TSA developed the “See Something, Say Something” campaign. This was clear, intentional messaging. Everyone understood. Each of us, every one of us, had a role to play in security. Each of us, every one of us, needed to be part of the solution.

We need similar clear, strong, and consistent messaging today about COVID-19 protocols, masking, the importance of following crewmember instructions, and the penalties if you don't.

If the first time a passenger hears about the mask mandate when they are boarding their flight, we are asking for trouble, and we are putting our flight crew at risk.

We need all of aviation to help enforce and reinforce the rules. This should include electronic messaging during and after booking, signage on airport access roads and transit, communications and acknowledgments embedded in the check-in process, clear and consistent signage, video and audio throughout parking areas and terminals, and with the active assistance of all personnel, including sky caps, airport greeters, the ticket counter, TSA, airport vendors, and restaurant workers, gate agents and flight crews.

## **Recommendations:**

1. Relevant House and Senate Committees should work with urgency to enact legislation that expands FBI concurrent jurisdiction to include the jetbridge in order to ensure enforcement of federal crimes for violence that occurs when the airplane door is open.
2. The DOJ must act with urgency to conduct criminal prosecution.
3. Develop and enforce stronger airport messaging that wearing a mask and following crewmember instructions are both required, and that failure to do so will result in penalties. Also, empower/promote the message that all parties – TSA, law enforcement, airport security, PSAs, pilots, and Flight Attendants - need to join the team to abbreviate the pandemic and keep air travel safe.
4. Enforce the mask mandate consistently, starting in the airport.
5. Increase coordination throughout the airport to keep problems on the ground and respond effectively in the event of incidents.
6. Require that all airport bars, restaurants, and shops post signage and issue verbal warnings to patrons who fail to comply with masking requirements and regulations related to alcohol consumption.

## **Drunk Passengers and Alcohol Consumption Allowed outside of Concessions**

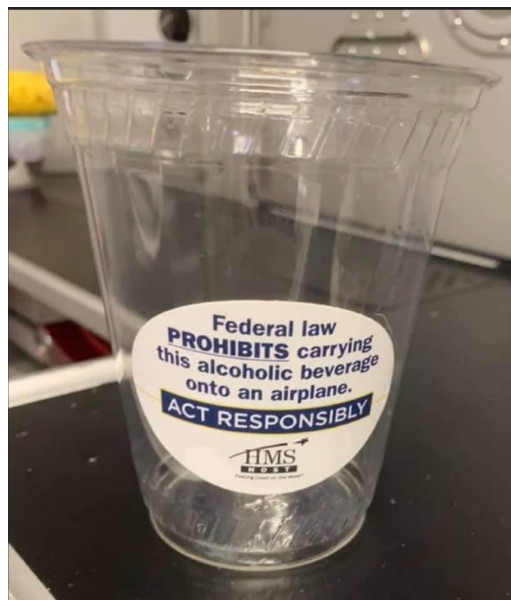
To facilitate mask-wearing and enhance COVID-19 safety protocols, a few carriers have limited in-flight food and beverage service, and either curtailed or ceased alcohol sales at this time. Flight Attendants across the country have praised these measures for assisting with compliance for the vast majority of passengers.



However, as our member survey made clear, alcohol continues to be a major driver of passenger noncompliance with safety rules and is an aggravating factor in many incidents with unruly, verbally and physically abusive travelers.

Many of the most disruptive and threatening passengers have attempted to bypass restrictions on in-flight service by drinking to excess prior to flight or by bringing alcohol onboard for consumption, in violation of FAA rules, which state that “no person may drink any alcoholic beverage aboard an aircraft unless the certificate holder operating the aircraft has served that beverage to him.” The purpose of this long-established safety rule is to empower airline personnel to guard against the safety risks from intoxicated passengers, including the risk that drunk travelers will fail to follow instructions.

We must convey to the Subcommittee our profound dismay that some airport vendors are actively undermining efforts to enhance compliance by encouraging passengers to violate alcohol consumption rules, while others have made an attempt to communicate with messaging directly on the cups they use to serve the alcohol. This is the kind of action airports can take that would be helpful.



We raised this issue during the September 2021 House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hearing and provided examples from Phoenix, St. Louis, and JFK. Travelers are met with calls to order alcohol delivery to your gate and “cocktails to go.” One ad at JFK, urges passengers to drive one cocktail at the bar and order up another to bring to the gate. This messaging is still in place today at these airports and many others.



These messages, and the policies behind them, are totally inconsistent with federal safety regulations and send a message that getting drunk before flying is permissible. After months of verbal and physical abuse from intoxicated passengers and unprecedented federal enforcement, it is time to end gateside alcohol delivery and airport cocktails to go. We need the FAA and Congress to send a clear message to airports, and to their concessions and vendors - you have a key role to play in supporting aviation safety and combating air rage, not profit from it.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Ban cocktails to-go and in-airport alcohol delivery.
2. Limit customers to purchasing one alcoholic beverage at a time.
3. Remind airports and vendors of their obligation not to serve inebriated passengers.
4. Airports must remind all airport employees of their shared responsibility to keep intoxicated passengers from boarding planes by notifying gate agents and crew members in advance.

### **Inconsistent and Insufficient Response to Aggressive Passenger Incidents**

The response to aggressive passenger incidents upon landing is inconsistent and generally insufficient at multiple levels. The communication chain from the cabin, to flight deck, ground coordinators, and law enforcement must work effectively in order to respond effectively and enforce compliance. If an aircraft returns to the gate after pushback due to a disruptive passenger incident, a report to the FAA is automatically generated. But it is not clear how incidents that do not involve a deviation from the flight plan get reported or investigated. Law enforcement response is not consistent at some airports, law enforcement will board and escort the offender off prior to everyone else deplaning. But often, either the offender will deplane and walk away because the passenger service agents (PSA) are not sure what occurred and there is no law enforcement presence.

We have attached reports to this testimony that detail the problems occurring with inconsistent response or failure to hold offenders accountable. [See Appendix A]

It bears repeating that we need a centralized list of offenders shared among airlines and used to deny the ability to fly for a period of time commensurate with the severity of the offense. We also recommend clarity for pilot reporting, ground response protocols, immediate consequences, and criminal prosecution. The FAA passenger fines should be directed into a legal/medical fund for affected crewmembers, Passenger Service Agents, and Transportation Security Officers.

### **Crewmember Self Defense Training Must Be Mandatory**

We thank this Subcommittee and full Committee for the consistent support of the voluntary crewmember self defense training program run by U.S. Air Marshals working in the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). This program is a critical component of security and it was intended to be provided as part of mandatory security training following the events of September 11, 2001.

Given the rise in cases of criminal violence and refusal to comply with federal safety requirements on board passenger flights, it is essential that Flight Attendants receive effective self-defense training that will better enable them to protect themselves and passengers from assault and injury.

### **Basic Course**

The basic course must allow for the repetition and drill necessary to gain the appropriate intellectual, physical, and emotional responses needed to protect oneself, fellow crewmembers, passengers and the aircraft from acts of intimidation and assault, causing injury and that may divert Flight Attendants from their duty to maintain situational awareness throughout the flight in order protect the flight deck and aircraft from acts of terrorism such as hijack or sabotage.

Basic tactics, techniques and procedures require the time necessary to become appropriate and effective.

Classroom - Lecture and Multimedia Presentation designed to develop:

- Cognitive recognition of acts of terrorism based on historical precedence and the latest counterterrorism intelligence.
- Stress inoculation against dealing with interpersonal human aggression and life threatening events.

Hands on Training, to develop:

- Tactical knowledge and skills to work together as a team with other crewmembers and able bodied passengers to prevent or mitigate any onboard acts of physical violence. This will include the use of tactical communications between Flight Attendants, pilots, and any federal air marshals and law enforcement responders who may be on board.

- Techniques designed to allow Flight Attendants to protect themselves against physical attack, restrain and monitor violent passengers for the remainder of flight, as well as respond to acts of sabotage to include potential suicide bombers and to prevent attempts to breach the cockpit and utilize the aircraft as a weapon of mass destruction.
- Procedures that are tested and proven to allow implementation of the tactics and techniques necessary to accomplish the mission, goals and objectives called out in the current Common Strategy Detailed Guidance provided by the Transportation Security Administration to all commercial aircraft carriers.

Live Situational Exercises designed to test the Flight Attendants':

- Learned knowledge, skills and abilities
- Under high fidelity simulated surroundings and stress
- Within the confines of a safe training environment

**Recurrent Training:** Recurrent Training to include hands on and situational exercises.

- Reinforce and maintain basic level knowledge, skills and abilities
- Introduce any updated information necessary due to changes in the threat environment.

The TSA Crewmember Self Defense Training Program is an established program that should be required to serve as basic and recurrent training needs of Flight Attendants in order to maintain order and discipline, and protect against physical criminal violence from any person(s) in the cabin. TSA could allow for multiple 2 hour sessions of its self-defense training program for initial training in order to reinforce muscle memory of these First Responders when confronted with a physical attack.

In the alternative, the TSA could establish a group of subject matter experts, including the lead defensive tactics coordinator for the Federal Air Marshal Service and the unit chief of the operational skills unit at the FBI academy at Quantico to determine minimum basic and recurrent training standards for Flight Attendant security and self-defense training, as well as a required certification program for airline-hired trainers to teach these courses. In the case of an airline, rather than direct TSA training, the TSA should annually attend each airline's self-defense and security training class for Flight Attendants without prior notification to the airline, in order to ensure that TSA's standards for security and self-defense training are being met by the airline.

## **Conclusion**

Again, this is not a 'new normal' we can accept. We know the government, airlines, airports, and all stakeholders can take actions together to keep us safe and secure. We look forward to working with this subcommittee on our union's proposed actions and recommendations to affect positive change.

## **APPENDIX A DISRUPTIVE PASSENGER INCIDENTS**

### **Report 1 Summary - August 2021**

A Flight Attendant (FA) report is an example of a local law enforcement officer (LEO) who was asked to come to the plane and deal with the threatening passengers. He got them off the plane first and just let them go into the airport without detaining them or asking them any questions. These passengers appeared to have violated the federal statute and FAA regulation on interference with crewmembers. The FA had expected they would be arrested. After they were not even stopped by the LEO, later googled the unruly man's name and picture and found he had served 5 years in prison. This something that the LEO should have done had he detained and questioned the alleged violators of the federal statute. This is frustrating for crewmembers to be threatened by profane passengers breaking the law and threatening the safety of the crew and other passengers, yet when an LEO is requested, he simply lets the alleged lawbreakers go.

I think that the problem with either LEO not showing up at the gate or taking no action against alleged criminally disruptive passengers is an issue that needs to be examined and corrected.

### **Report 2 Summary - August 2021**

A flight landed early in Atlanta and there was no gate and we had to wait for a while. A woman got upset and started yelling profanities. "Y'all better get me off this motherf\*\*king plane and right motherf\*\*king now". She called someone on her phone and alternately talked very loudly to them and screaming at us and the whole plane. There are too many profanities she used for me to remember them all. Then two men she was traveling with started yelling at us as well. The woman seated in another row turned around at one point and started to engage with the woman telling her to "shut up" etc. Most passengers in the area just tried to look away or rolled their eyes at the three. The woman was banging on the window, kicking the seats and fuselage all the while screaming very graphic profanities. Once we had reached the gates the man stood up and started yelling things to me such as "what if I gotta take a s\*\*t or piss. Imma s\*\*t right here and throw it all over your a\*\* if you don't let me off this mother f\*\*king plane". He kept telling everyone that he was going to come open my door. When I informed him that it's a 20 foot drop to the ground should he try it, he replied "well then you better go get me two mother f\*\*king ladders. One to climb down and one to get up over there." He also said he wasn't going to be able to go get his weed now and that he would "roll a motherfu\*\*king blunt and smoke right here on this motherf\*\*king plane". That we were holding him hostage on the plane. The flight attendants tried to calm them but there was no calming. The man would shout things at me and then start videotaping my reaction. I gave him none as I knew he was just trying to incite me and the other passengers for his one moment of Instagram fame. After several attempts at this and after the threat to open my door, I asked the captain to have law enforcement officers (LEOs) there once we had a jet bridge. We closed the cockpit door on lockdown and I had a flight attendant request the help of a professional athlete/trainer seated in another row in the event the two men and woman tried to come open my door. This passenger remained standing between us and the irate three. Once the jet bridge was pulled up and the door opened I spoke

with the LEO and informed him of what was happening. He asked me to have everyone remain seated and to let those three seats off first. We did and the officer just let them go, never questioning them nor stopping them. I wanted them off the plane and arrested given the physical damage she was doing to the plane itself and the threats from the shorter man with her. The couple seated in row X and Y were visibly upset at the behavior of these three and the woman seated in row Z looked very scared as she was seated right where the man was conducting his rants and threats. However it appeared that the only thing that happened was that the unruly passengers were allowed to be the first ones off the plane. As a crew we tried to stay together as we didn't know where these passengers were in the terminal or what they might do. We had no security to walk us to the plane train or out to our hotel shuttle.

### **Report 3 Summary - October 2021**

During boarding we had a passenger who appeared to be either intoxicated or in need of assistance. We had an agent remove a passenger already and asked the agent to speak to the passenger in seat X about possible intoxication as well. As the agent spoke with the passenger, Flight Attendant A noticed that the passenger was in the wrong seat and had a disability with a meet and assist set up in Seattle. We kept the passenger onboard after the brief investigation and allowed her to stay in seat X instead of moving to her assigned seat at 10D due to not wanting to stress her further. As we taxied onto the runway Flight Attendant A made an emergency call to the flight deck and informed us that seat X had sexually assaulted another passenger and that we needed to return to the gate. As we returned to the gate, we called law enforcement. Law enforcement arrived and it was determined that deplaning all the passengers would be the safest way to remove the passenger in seat X. After deplaning the passenger, we took a crew break to decompress before reboarding and taking off.

### **Report 4 Summary - October 2021**

Two passengers boarded who were intoxicated - a man and a woman. The man's eyes were bloodshot, his speech was slurred and he had a hard time keeping his mask on. Two Flight Attendants agreed that a Customer Reservation Official (CRO) needed to be called and the flight deck was notified. One of the intoxicated passengers deplaned without an issue but the other passenger did not. She refused to get off the plane and then the police were called. As a result, we all had to deplane the aircraft. In the future, if the agent agents notice intoxicated passengers in the gate these passengers should be prevented from boarding.

### **Report 5 Summary - November 2021**

As I was greeting the passengers during boarding I noticed Mr X not wearing a mask and visibly discombobulated, I advised him of the mask policy and provided him with a mask. He put on the mask before proceeding to his seat. Right before door closure I was checking bag compliance in the bulkhead area and noticed Mr X not wearing his mask and trying to gain access to the mid lavatory but was confused with the door knob. I once again advised him of the mask policy and that's where it became clear he was intoxicated. The agent was nearby so I told her that Mr X needed to be removed as we are now aware he is intoxicated and should have never boarded

the aircraft. As I walked to the front to inform the captain, the agent made a statement saying that she knew he was going to be our problem child. The captain and I both agree that Mr X needed to be removed and take a later flight.

During the flight I went to his original seat and cleaned up the tray table with Clorox wipes as Mr X had thrown up and we weren't aware of that until then.

## **Report 6 Summary - November 2021**

I was at door 1 during boarding when I encountered a couple who boarded the aircraft. As they entered the aircraft I noticed that the female was walking unusually, so I started to watch her more closely. When she turned right to walk down the aircraft aisle she staggered and hit the side of the galley wall, it was at this time I started to think she may have been under the influence. The male grabs her elbow to stabilize her and guide her down the aisle. I asked them to come back and step into the galley so I could talk to them. The female was completely out of it; her eyes were very glassy, she was slurring her words, rambling, she wasn't finishing her sentences and didn't appear to be cognizant of where she was. The male kept trying to speak on her behalf stating she was ok and that she was just a little buzzed. Female passenger could not stand up by herself; she was leaning against the forward part of the galley. Male passenger advised that they had been on delayed flights all day. All of sudden the female passenger loudly blurted out she had to poop. The male passenger said she was walking funny because she had to go to the bathroom; the female passenger asked if she could go to the bathroom, I said yes and opened the door for her. When she went in she staggered in and bumped into the left side of the lavatory door, she never locked the door and she came out in less than 3 minutes. It was clear to me she was under the influence and showing red light behaviors: moving in slow motion, needing time to respond to questions, glassy eyed, losing train of thought, walking awkwardly and unable to stand upright without assistance. So I advised the Captain we had a person under the influence who would need to be taken off. He got up and spoke to them. Due to my proximity I could hear most of the conversation. The male just kept saying the female had to go to the bathroom. That is why she was walking weird. The girl then said yep I had to poop. The male kept saying they were loyal airline patrons and could he let them stay onboard. The Captain asked if they would behave during the flight and of course they said yes. I whispered to the Captain that I needed to speak to him. We went into the cockpit where I stated they were both clearly under the influence and I wanted them removed. He asked me if my mind was made up. I stated it was. He went back to the couple and told them he would be back; he went to speak to CS and ask for a supervisor. While the Captain was gone the male kept trying to plead his case. I told him it was a FAR violation to allow a passenger to board that appears to be under the influence. He said he would pay my fine; I told him it doesn't work that way. During the first conversation I had with the male passenger he was engaging, charismatic, and a bit apologetic. During this second conversation he was more angry, threatening and baiting. He asked for my name again; I told him again that my name was X. He demanded my last name, again I told him I don't provide my last name due to security concerns. He sneered and said of course you don't. He said I would regret this. The Captain came back and again the male was jovial and charismatic. We waited quite a while for the CS supervisor to come to the gate; during this time the Captain stayed with the couple. At one point the Captain was going to have them

step off the aircraft and into the jetbridge, so I asked boarding passengers to stop and to step to their right so they could deplane. For some reason, the Captain changed his mind, so I started boarding again. It was at this time FA 2 told me a passenger had something I needed to hear. Passenger was seated in rows XXX. We went into the FC cabin so she could speak to me away from them. She advised that the two individuals that we had in our galley had been disruptive at the gate for mask compliance along with other issues. She advised that the CS agent had stopped boarding to address the issues as he was trying to determine if they should be boarded. I also received similar information from the 12E, she stated that after they saw the couples behavior they figured they would be able to get on the tight flight as they assumed the crew would not let those passengers remain onboard. Finally the CS Supervisor came down to the plane; they took off only the male and left the female onboard. Then they took the female off; they were having her walk for them. I no longer could see her but I noticed the male was bending down and pulling something from his bag. He then aggressively stepped back onto the aircraft towards me with camera in his hand; I quickly took steps back to get away from him and raised my hand to block him. With his other hand he struck my hand that was raised. I must have cried out; a passenger in X row came to see if I was ok as well as the first officer who said he saw the male passenger had a camera 6 inches from my face. I am not certain if the male walked off the aircraft by himself or if he was taken off by ground personnel. I was asked if he had struck me. I advised that he had struck my hand. I was then asked if I wanted to press charges. I said I did. Police came down and I provided my statement. To say the least this is concerning. The Inflight Supervisor took a picture of the police report. I believe this event occurred for two reasons: first, one agent working a delayed flight has a lot of pressure to monitor and make quick determination without trying to impact the flight. I was told that it looked as if the CS Agent was not going to board them but something changed his mind. Most likely the male passenger did the same thing he did in front of me, by grabbing her elbow to stabilize and direct her and speaking for both of them. I don't fault the Agent at all, this is why we have multiple layers to catch noncompliance. But I do feel that having a second set of eyes at the boarding gate would have made a difference. Secondly, I believe the assault happened due to the fact that the male passenger was allowed to remain within the vicinity of me and knew I was the one that had them removed.

### **Report 7 Summary - July 2021**

Working the aft galley position, a Flight Attendant heard loud voices in the aisle aircraft left. As I stood in the J/S area observing, a gate agent was speaking to the man in row X (originally assigned row Y, but he was traveling with his wife so the lady moved to row X next to her husband). Passengers were loudly saying "get him off" "He's going to be a problem" "He was a problem in the gate" The man (Mr. C) kept yelling SHUT UP to the passengers. I saw our Captain, coming down the aisle.

I went to the galley to monitor. Captain & Mr. C came into my galley. The Captain asked me to stay in the galley while he talked to Mr. C. Mr. C constantly interrupted the Captain. The Captain finally said I do not want to hear you talk, if you're talking you're not listening. Mr. C finally stayed quiet. The Captain said "If you don't comply with the Flight Attendants request to keep your mask on I will turn this plane around and land back in Johannesburg". Mr. C laughed and



said "No you wont" Captain turned to me as a witness to the exchange, & asked ", do you think he will comply with your requests?" I said no. Due to his aggressive/dismissive behavior I do not believe Mr. C had any intentions of keeping his mask on nor complying with any requests of the Flight Attendants.

Captain said "Neither do I" and went to the front of the aircraft. Security had to be called to remove him.

### **Report 8 Summary - September 2021**

Prior to door closure passenger K showed up at boarding door, holding a tagged tote bag and he dropped it at the aircraft door. I advised the passenger to leave the bag on the Jet bridge to be checked in since it was tagged. Mr. D was reaching for his bag to move it to the proper spot and he staggered almost hitting his head on the Jet bridge door. Another Flight Attendant (FA "B") asked the passenger if he was ok. Passenger kept staggering then came to the boarding door. I asked the passenger Mr. D if he was ok since his gait was not right, he was flushed on the face, glassy eyes and had a strong alcohol stench. We asked him several times if he was ill or not feeling well and he loudly and proudly told us he had been drinking. I then went to the Captain and told the Captain we have a passenger by the boarding door who appears to be intoxicated. Captain said do not let the passenger board. Send him back to Customer Service Rep (CSR). CSR supervisor then came onboard and I heard her telling the captain that the captain has no right to deny boarding when the aircraft is on the ground. CSR supervisor then stormed out of the aircraft. Captain advised not to close the door until the CSR supervisor returns, Boarding agent came on board and closed the door despite the Captain's request.