

Much is heard about the cost of modifying present day aircraft and designing future aircraft so that the degree of safety of their operation will be improved. Particularly this is heard in regard to improving the crashworthiness or survivability characteristics of present day aircraft.

Air carriers, airframe and component manufacturers, and airport operators should not be heard to complain that such improvements will be costly, for it is the passenger who ultimately will bear the economic burden of these beneficial changes, either in the form of tickets or taxes.

The APA believes that every aspect of airline operation should be directed to obtaining the ultimate in safety for the passengers, particularly when the compromise of safety might result in short term economic gain by reason of load factor or other cost of operation.

The stress for maximum utilization of cabin interiors for optimum passenger seating is an example where economic interests must be balanced by the primary responsibility for passenger safety in the event of an evacuation. The Government has recently taken the first of many important steps to insure that evacuation considerations will be implemented by manufacturers and air carriers. Much more remains to be done.

Where safety results in reductions in efficiency and economy, it simply means a relative increase in the cost of operation, the economic burden of which will ultimately be borne by the passenger.

It must be realized that safety is no accident. To assure that the passenger will arrive alive will require the coordinated efforts of Government, industry, and the flying public.

LETHAL THREATS POSED TO PASSENGERS BY TOXIC CABIN MATERIALS

In the past 6 years, 174 passengers have perished in accidents which the Federal Aviation Agency Administration calls "survivable". The APA feels that one of the factors that has contributed to this high death rate in survivable accidents is the fact that most modern airliners can be lethal gas chambers when afire. The aviation industry has been aware for some years that the materials contained in commercial airline cabins release toxic gases upon thermal decomposition.

It has been relatively recent that the exact nature and quantities of these gases has been made known. Hydrogen cyanide, which is used in California and other States in their prison gas chambers, is generated in large quantities by the burning of certain acrylic materials commonly found in rugs, seats and other interior appointments.

Tests run in mid-1966 by the Airline Pilots Association, together with supporting airline organizations, showed concentrations of hydrogen cyanide of at least 50 times the lethal level. The National Bureau of Standards pinpointed some of the substances which contained high hydrogen cyanide concentrations.

The Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, which does studies of victims of air disasters for the National Transportation Safety Board, admitted that hydrogen cyanide was present in the tests run on the bodies of the three astronauts who were the victims of the Apollo disaster at Cape Kennedy. Tests for hydrogen cyanide and other toxic substances have not been routinely run on these victims of aviation disasters.