



COVID-19 – An Unexpected Risk to Aircraft Safety

ATA Ch 10

The Corona crisis is challenging the world on many levels. Of course, the immediate priority must be to use all available resources to preserve life. On a personal level we must do all we can to reach out and help those who need it the most. We of course also rely heavily on experts in the field of health and medicine to achieve this goal.

The current situation will however come to an end and life will start returning to normal. Just as we rely on health safety experts and specialists to do what is necessary, the aviation world must ensure it does the same in terms of protecting future passengers' safety by preserving aircraft maintenance programmes and airworthiness.

With commercial aviation now grounding their aircraft fleets it is easy to believe that aircraft doors are closed and that is that until the time comes in 3 - 6 months to start flying again. On the contrary, aircraft still require regular maintenance and servicing to remain airworthy and safe. Indeed, to ensure aircraft return safely to commercial service after long periods of inactivity, so called parking and storage maintenance is now required.

Aircraft parking and storage procedures are complex and follow tight calendar driven servicing schedules. Due to the complexity of these parking schedules AEI urges all engineers, technicians, and mechanics to familiarise themselves with the manufacturers recommended procedures contained in the specific Aircraft Maintenance Manual, Chapter 10. Remember, these procedures are there for a reason, namely, to maintain airworthiness and safety standards at a level to prepare them for the day they are expected to fly again. Regulators, manufacturers, airlines, and maintenance organisations should act accordingly to ensure we have an airworthy fleet ready to safely return to the air once the COVID-19 crisis is over.

AEI President, Ola Blomqvist, says, "Professionally we have to remain focussed on keeping aircraft safe and airworthy. Do not tolerate shortcuts when making safety critical decisions. Ensure parking programs are strictly adhered to. We are aware of the financial pressure put on employers and on staff, but that will not be accepted as an excuse by the flying public if it results in incidents or accidents."

Airlines, despite the current difficulties, should be ensuring that sufficient personnel remain employed to perform these tasks. Parking programs are not "wild cards" to cease maintenance activities. Engineers, certifying for the aircraft's return to service (CRS), have a huge responsibility and should not be placed under time constraints. Parking programs are one aspect of aircraft maintenance most engineers are not familiar with. **Before signing the CRS, following aircraft preservation, ensure all preservation steps have been carried out IAW the relevant maintenance manual.**

Aircraft Engineers International