

“ *Communication without understanding is just noise* ”

The R.E.S.P.E.C.T.  
principle of communication

# HOW IMPORTANT IS COMMUNICATION IN AVIATION SAFETY?

- Lack of data about communication / language issues
- No **global** reporting system
- **Just Culture** – confidentiality & anonymity / non-punitive
- *‘I avoid as much as possible to fill safety reports because I fly in a very punitive and arbitrary country’ - PILOT, COLOMBIA*
- *‘Such safety reports are never put to good use. Rather it is taken as poor communication of the reporting individual’ – PILOT, INDIA*
- Communication is a factor in **70%** of incidents / accidents

# HOW IMPORTANT IS COMMUNICATION IN AVIATION SAFETY?

- 1977 – Tenerife runway collision - 583 fatalities
- 1990 - Avianca B707, runs out of fuel - 73 fatalities
- 1995 - American B757, crashes into a mountain in Colombia - 159 fatalities

## Other examples:

### **BRITISH AIRWAYS (2008) – LONDON**

- Boeing 777 landed short of the runway due to engine failure.
- All passengers and crew survived.
- Cabin crew members were praised for their professionalism and efficiency in evacuating passengers.

### **US AIRWAYS (2009) - NEW YORK**

- Airbus A320 ditched into the Hudson River.
- Cabin crew acted swiftly to evacuate passengers onto the aircraft's wings and onto rescue boats.

## Other examples:

### AIR CANADA (1983) - CINCINNATI

- DC-9 - emergency landing due to a fire in toilet.
- 23 passengers died.
- Cabin crew were unable to make themselves heard (the PA system failed and the megaphone was not used).
- Passengers remained seated and awaited orders (a phenomenon known as '**Behavioural Inaction**').

## 2024: JAL A350 and a Japan Coast Guard Dash 8

- ATC cleared the JAL aircraft to land on runway 34R
- Coast Guard aircraft was instructed to hold short of the runway
- Coast Guard pilot thought he had clearance to take off
- Two planes collided and caught fire
- Five of the six crew on the Dash 8 died
- Everyone on the A350 survived

## 2024: JAL A350 and a Japan Coast Guard Dash 8

- 18 minutes to evacuate the 379 passengers on the JAL flight
- PA system malfunctioned (forcing flight attendants to use megaphones)
- 5 of the 8 emergency exits were unsafe for evacuation

## 2024: JAL A350 and a Japan Coast Guard Dash 8

How did the JAL crew do such a fantastic job?

Passengers did not take baggage with them when leaving the aircraft

- (a) the effectiveness of the safety briefing
- (b) cultural issues in relation to following instructions
- (c) JAL's policy of allowing 20kg of free checked baggage

# Safety Video:



Safety video:



# LAPLAND, FINLAND



# US Flight Attendants



## COMMUNICATION – what's the purpose?

	PURPOSE
JAL	Primarily safety
QANTAS	Safety and promotion / marketing
US Flight Attendants	Safety and entertainment



# COMMUNICATION – what's the purpose?



- We communicate differently according to the situation
- Pilots and controllers – radiotelephony
- Transfer information from one party to another
- 'FASTAIR 345 - CLIMB TO FL 330'



MOTIVATE

*'We can do this!'*

PERSUADE

*'I suggest you Climb to FL 330 ...  
what do you think?'*

BE POLITE

*'If it's not too much trouble would  
you mind ...'*

# CABIN CREW LANGUAGE - appropriate for the purpose

SAFETY BRIEFINGS	Clear, formal, instructional	"In the event of a loss of cabin pressure, oxygen masks will drop from the panel above your head"
IN-FLIGHT ANNOUNCEMENTS	Concise, relaxed	"We're now cruising at an altitude of 30,000 feet, with an estimated arrival time of 3:45 PM"
CUSTOMER SERVICE	Polite, accommodating	"I understand. Let me see if there are other available options for you"
EMERGENCY PROCEDURES	Direct, clear, short, loud	"Leave your belongings! Move towards the nearest exit now!"
TEAM COORDINATION	Specific, technical (e.g. <i>cross-check</i> )	"We're ready for service on row 12. I'll handle the special meal requests"
LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE	Simple, slow, repetitive	"Do you need help with your seatbelt? Like this... (demonstrates)"
CONFLICT RESOLUTION	Calm, de-escalating	"I can see you're upset. Let's talk about what we can do to resolve this"

## For Safe, Effective Communication

# R E S P E C T

R	REPHRASE	If there is confusion, don't just repeat; rephrase using different words	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
E	EMPATHY	Try to put yourself in the position of the other person. Is English their first language?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
S	SMILE	Body language can have different meanings ... but a smile is universally understood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P	PAUSE	Pause and speak slowly to give the listener time to process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
E	EMPHASISE	Emphasise key information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
C	CLEAR & CONCISE	Speak clearly and be concise. Less is often more	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T	TWO-WAY	Communication is a shared responsibility. Listen actively and adjust your language	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



“

*How well we communicate is not  
determined by how well we say things  
but how well we are understood*

Andy Grove – co-founder, Intel Corporation

”

Communication without understanding is just noise