

Resolution #79A-23-05

Mobilizing for Good Jobs and Safety in the Aviation Industry

CWA passenger service and reservation agents together with Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA-CWA) members play a critical role in keeping our economy functioning, facilitating an efficient transportation system, and keeping us all safe. At a minimum they need safe working conditions, adequate pay and meaningful efforts to stop disruptive behavior by passengers.

Passenger service agents routinely face dangers due to the lack of effective training, clear and unambiguous communication on the ramp, consistently functioning equipment, and proper protocols that ensure that engines are turned off prior to agents performing their ramp duties. In a CWA survey of agents at Envoy Air and Piedmont earlier this year, 79% of respondents stated that ramp duties were always, often or sometimes performed while an aircraft engine was running or spooling down when parked at the gate.

These conditions led to the tragic death on the job of Courtney Edwards, a member of Local 3645 and a passenger service agent for Piedmont in Montgomery, Alabama, who lost her life in an on-the-job accident on December 31, 2022.

Passenger service agents, reservation agents, and flight attendants continue to face threats on the job due to hostile and disruptive passengers. CWA and AFA-CWA members have successfully advocated for numerous policy changes over the years, including establishing federal penalties for assaulting flight attendants and passenger service agents, increasing fines, and requiring airlines to develop plans to prevent assaults against those of us on the frontlines.

Nonetheless, these incidents continue on a routine basis, putting CWA and AFA-CWA members at direct risk and interfering with our efforts to ensure a safe and efficient aviation system.

In the cabin and on the ground, workers face hazards that need mitigation: excessive heat or cold, contaminated air, and outdated emergency equipment that puts ground crew, cabin crew, and passengers at risk.

Our fight for dignity on the job also continues. We have to fight to stop efforts to outsource our jobs or create business models that undermine safety regulations and suppress wages and benefits. We must likewise fight for rights at work like pumping breast milk safely in flight and promoting diversity rather than depressing it.

Without proper staffing and investment in aviation infrastructure capacity and efficiency of aviation is hampered - making our days longer with a system stretched thin, increased anger from the traveling public, and long term detriment to our job security.

The current authorization for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) expires on September 30, 2023 and Congress has begun considering legislation to reauthorize the FAA. This bill provides us an opportunity to build on our past successes. It also requires us to be vigilant to defeat anti-union efforts that lower standards and enshrine a race-to-the-bottom dynamic in wages, working conditions, and passenger experience throughout the industry.

Resolved: CWA is committed to fighting for fair compensation, decent working conditions, and dignity and safety on the job for our members and all workers in the aviation industry.

Resolved: CWA will mobilize members and work to ensure timely passage of FAA Reauthorization legislation that protects and builds on our members' rights and protections on the job and a national air transportation system that supports good union jobs across our union and our Labor Movement.