



AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL

THE WORLD'S LARGEST PILOTS UNION • WWW.ALPA.ORG

1625 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20036 • 703-689-2270 • 888-FLY-ALPA

April 17, 2020

Administrator Steve Dickson
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Via e-mail transmission

Dear Administrator Dickson:

Thank you for your letter dated April 14 responding to my urgent appeal dated March 31 to protect the health and safety of airline crewmembers and the flying and shipping public. On behalf of the more than 63,000 pilots represented by the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA), I want to express my frustration and profound disappointment at your unwillingness to take the action we requested—requiring airlines to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations regarding public-health guidelines—to help stop the spread of the coronavirus.

The absence of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) leadership to protect the health of pilots serving on the frontlines of the battle against this pandemic means the aviation professionals who fly medical personnel, equipment, and supplies to the outbreak hotspots are putting themselves at increased—and preventable—health risk.

Airline pilots are testing positive for COVID-19 at twice the rate other Americans are experiencing—a dire statistic that could be reduced significantly by a mandate requiring U.S. airlines to abide by U.S. government guidance regarding exposure notification and workplace sterilization. More than 250 of our members have tested positive for the coronavirus, and at least three have died.

We are in the middle of a global public-health crisis, and the FAA appears to be unwilling or unable to find the fortitude to direct the airlines to take all CDC-recommended steps to protect essential employees and do what needs to be done to keep crews and passengers from getting sick and dying.

Our union has received a significant number of reports from airline pilots who work for airlines large and small and at bases across the United States, Asia, and Europe describing routine and repeated failures to meet minimum CDC guidelines. For example, some U.S. airlines are:

- Failing to clean and disinfect the flight deck at all.
- Posting signage indicating that the flight deck has been cleaned when no cleaning personnel have entered the flight deck.
- Using cleaning solutions and materials that fail to meet the minimum alcohol content requirement established by the CDC and approved by the FAA and are known to be ineffective against COVID-19.
- Requiring pilots to continue to fly after exposure to a COVID-19 test-positive individual or crewmember.
- Failing to direct crewmembers to self-quarantine after exposure to a COVID-19 test-positive individual.

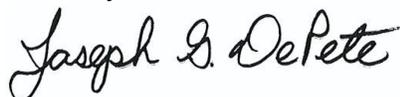
These and other reports expose a highly disturbing trend: multiple airline companies are failing to inform employees who have come into contact with coworkers who have tested positive for COVID-19 or to sanitize flight decks and training equipment using government-approved disinfectants. The public-health ramifications of these failures go well beyond our pilots' health to threaten the health of our families and communities.

The FAA clearly agrees with ALPA that it has the statutory authority and responsibility to act but is refusing to exercise that authority because it does not have the moral courage to stand up to the airlines. Interestingly, in its letter to ALPA, the FAA asserts that the agency is “not a public health authority,” and that it must allow others to issue guidance. Yet, in February 2006, the FAA published the attached *Federal Register* [notice](#) in which it affirmatively identifies itself as a “public health authority.” We agree that the FAA is a public health authority and that it is the FAA’s responsibility under the law to promote the safe operations of civil aircraft. The FAA must not delegate its authority to airlines and hope that they do the right thing.

The U.S. passengers and businesses that depend on air transportation need and deserve swift and decisive leadership by the FAA to not only protect the health of the individual airline pilots who are serving on the frontlines of the fight against COVID-19, but also to ensure that the United States will have pilots available to drive our national and global economic recovery.

In closing, I urge you in the strongest possible terms to take the action needed now to issue a regulatory order to protect the health of the hardworking men and women I am proud to represent. Releasing an unenforceable “safety advisory” to ask that airlines protect public health and safety is categorically insufficient to protect pilots. This issue could not be easier to rectify—and the consequences of failing to do so could not be more dire. The health and safety of the nation’s airline pilot workforce rest in your hands.

Sincerely,



Captain Joseph G. DePete
President