

For Island Air pilots, 2009 was a breakthrough year. After 16 months of contract negotiations with management, the pilots ratified a new collective bargaining agreement in June 2009. And the new 4-year agreement came with immediate improvements, including wage increases, work rule advances, and furlough protections.

Island Air

Island Air Pilots Ratify New Contract

By Lydia Jakub, ALPA Communications Specialist

“Faced with many challenges throughout the negotiations process, we believe the result speaks for itself,” says Capt. Charlie Cizek, the pilots’ MEC chairman.

The result: During the next 4 years, Island Air pilots will receive wage increases totaling 12 percent and other economic and work rule improvements that will increase compensation. Reserve guarantee increased to 70 hours; minimum day increased to 3.8 hours; daily show time was maintained; new taxi pay was achieved and will be paid on top of guarantee; per diem increased nearly 38 percent to \$55 per day; a release delay fee will be paid on top of guarantee to pilots who are not released from duty within 30 minutes of block-in; and a mechanical delay fee will be paid to pilots in the event of such an occurrence. Additionally, vacation accrual was increased and sick leave pay caps were raised.

The agreement also provided furlough protection for 48 pilot positions—the number of active pilots on the date the tentative agreement was reached—until 90 days prior to the contract amendable date. An additional six pilots, representing the number of pilots on leaves of absence or working under flex bids at the time, may move in seniority order onto the “protected list” during the duration of the agreement in the event of attrition by any of the original 48 protected pilots. However, pilots may be furloughed if capacity drops below agreed-upon levels.

The final noteworthy change concerned adjustments to segment times to move them closer to realistic, historical averages. Pilots are now paid the greater of contractual segment time (i.e., scheduled average time), actual flight time, and scheduled block time. Scheduled average times will be reviewed every 2 years and adjusted accordingly based upon historical average times. Flight

times will be recorded in minutes, but converted to tenths of an hour and averaged based upon rounding upward to the nearest tenth of an hour. Currently, the pilots and management are disputing the calculation of flight times and a grievance is pending resolution.

The contract victory, though long-awaited, was also short-lived. Interisland travel declined sharply soon after the agreement was ratified, and this unfortunate trend continued throughout 2009, making the market ripe for competition. While Hawaiian Airlines remains the dominant interisland carrier, Republic-owned Mokulele Airlines entered into this competitive market, joining *go!*, an interisland subsidiary of Mesa Air Group. Island Air and *go!* then entered into a codeshare agreement, and a new round of interisland fare wars began. However, Island Air management elected not to engage in the latest fare war and instead implemented dramatic capacity cuts and furloughed nearly a dozen pilots. It is unclear when management intends to return to previous capacity levels.

Recently, Island Air’s Ohana culture—extended family looking out for one another—has also deteriorated, which could be attributed to the fairly aggressive approach management began taking with the pilots in March. Grievances, which were once virtually nonexistent at Island Air, have been filed over management’s novel interpretation of new language in the pilots’ recently amended collective bargaining agreement. Management has reinterpreted furlough language, as well as language pertaining to how segment times are calculated for pay purposes to avoid paying pilots by the method agreed upon. Though only one arbitration has been conducted in the past 4 years, two cases are currently scheduled for arbitration in early 2010.

“We hope management soon realizes that maintaining a positive relationship with its pilots will yield better results than spending an exorbitant amount of time and money on lawyers and arbitrations,” says Cizek. “Management needs to start abiding by the contract and focus on positioning Island Air to take advantage of the anticipated industry improvements in 2010 and beyond. Working together, our company will succeed.”



Island Air F/O Terry Salazar.

AIS at a Glance

Pilots Joined ALPA: 1989

Number of Pilots: Approximately 45, including 15 on furlough

Operations: Approximately 36 daily flights plus charter service to all eight major airports in Hawaii

Service: Island Air is Hawaii’s leading regional carrier, serving airports on all major Hawaiian Islands with approximately 250 weekly flights between the islands of Oahu, Maui, Molokai, Lanai, Kauai, and the island of Hawaii

Fleet: 4 Dash 8-100s