

UK Flight Safety Committee,
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Operational Strategy Division

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Head of Transportation Section
Chris Barringer

For attention of the Health and Safety Manager

Dear Sir/Madam

INSPECTION OF BAGGAGE HANDLING ACTIVITIES

In January 2009, the Health and Safety Executive published the findings of a research project conducted at East Midlands airport, focussing on the risks associated with the loose-loading of baggage in narrow-bodied aircraft and a copy of the report can be accessed at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr675.pdf>. This research highlighted the risk of musculo-skeletal disorders arising from the manual handling of baggage and indicated an appropriate hierarchy of control measures. Despite wide industry awareness, this has not resulted in the anticipated improvement in standards and the rate of reported cases of musculo-skeletal disorders in baggage handlers remains approximately five times that for all industries.

As a result, an inspection campaign is to start in April 2010 which will look at the baggage handling process. This will initially be targeted in the South-East of England and will include Heathrow, Gatwick, and Stansted airports. The aims of this initiative are:

- To improve manual handling standards in the manual loading and unloading of passenger bags into and from aircraft on the ramp, with the use of enforcement where necessary;
- To reduce the incidence of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) among airport baggage handlers;
- To raise awareness of the need for cooperation, coordination and communication between the airport, airlines and ground handlers in the planning and monitoring of baggage handling practices throughout the baggage handling chain;
- To ensure the use of suitable lifting equipment and manual handling aids in the movement of passenger bags; and
- To achieve consistency in standards of baggage handling between all ground handling companies and airlines in the target airports, and through this to extend understanding of the issues to other airports throughout Great Britain.

Where standards are found to be inadequate, Inspectors will take appropriate enforcement action targeted at those with the greatest influence over the activities, so that sustained improvements can be made.

Instructions to Inspectors will shortly be published on our website but in the meantime, if you have any queries regarding this initiative, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Myles Francis', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Myles Francis
HM Inspector of Health and Safety