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August 15, 2000

Department of Transportation

Dockets

Docket No. FAA-2000-7119 -33

400 7th St. S.W. Room 401

Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to you in response to the proposal, Docket No. FAA-2000-7119, concerning major airlines to provide more intense medical and first aid training to their flight attendants. As a former flight attendant for Northwest Airlines, for nearly four years, I am quite concerned about this proposal. I am concerned that they are medical conditions and scenarios that occur daily on the aircraft that requires a doctor or certified nurse, and not a flight attendant with limited medical training. Normally there are doctors, nurses, or qualified medical personnel that by chance are traveling passengers on board, who often are asked to assist the crew with in-flight medical emergencies, but in some incidents the crew is forced to rely on their own limited medical training. I truly feel that flight attendants are quite busy already on the aircraft with other duties that require a lot of time, energy, and patience. I am not saying that flight attendants are incapable of providing adequate medical care on board, I just think that it puts a lot of liability and responsibility on the flight attendant group as a whole. Most of the major airlines have already begun implementing training and recurrent training sessions for their flight attendants in the use of an automatic external defibrillator. I, myself, have also been trained in the use of this device, and found that even with eight hours of medical training, that I would still be a little nervous about using this medical device. I personally feel that because I am not a doctor that the responsibility of having to send shock waves through someone's heart requires a knowledge of medical training that is beyond me. It's not that I don't want to save lives if possible, but the possibility of having to use a defibrillator or performing CPR is two very different things. As flight attendants, we are safety professionals, that are often faced with various situations that go beyond our job description and knowledge. As a group though we are trained to assess situations and deal with them as best as we can. I realize that there are many people who are unfamiliar with our duties on board the aircraft, besides serving the meal and wearing a smile, but it can become very stressful especially in medical situations. As professionals in the aviation industry it is very hard to get respect from most passengers unless it involves an emergency situation. It is then and only then that the flight attendant becomes an authority figure on board. I would like to say that proposed legislation for the implementation of increased medical training for the AED or automatic external defibrillator, the proposed improvement of medical kits (by way of adding oral antihistamines, nonnarcotic pain reliever, aspirin, an IV administration kit, CPR masks, and a bag to help breathing after use of an AED) are all commendable efforts by the Federal Aviation Administration to improve safety in the skies, in the event of an unexpected medical situation are all commendable but also very controversial. Flight attendants are often faced with performing a multitude of tasks on board the aircraft that are accompanied by a great responsibility. Being able to maintain some semblance of order among the passengers as well as being able to react quickly to emergencies with only a moment's notice can be trying. If we as flight attendants are required to become doctors as well as safety professionals, then it would be wise to not only be provided with more than adequate medical training but also increased wages for the medical responsibility and duties that will be expected of us in the future years to come. I would like to sincerely thank you for taking the time to read this letter, I truly hope that it will aid you in your decision for the proposed legislation for now and the future years to come.

Sincerely,

