



## MPs briefing

# LIGHTEN UP – CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT INJURY IN CIVIL AVIATION

Over two years ago the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Aviation Industry Group recommended the reduction of weight of checked-in baggage from 32 to 23 kilograms per item as part of a series of measures that would reduce the risks of handling heavy baggage. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has backed this call.

- Baggage handlers are five times more likely to suffer muscular skeletal injury than any other group of UK workers.
- On average a handler will move nine tonnes of baggage during a shift.
- Each item of baggage is handled 10 times from check-in to collection.
- Reducing the checked-in weight of baggage from 32 kg to 23 kg would "have a positive effect on reducing the risk of injury." (HSE January 2009)

An HSE research report, published in January 2009, based on the findings of a collaborative project at East Midlands Airport concluded that introducing an international single item baggage weight limit of between 32 kg to 23 kg would have a positive effect by eliminating the bags that present the greatest risk.

Currently, airlines have a maximum luggage weight cap of 32 kg per item. While luggage over 23 kg is generally labelled as heavy, this does not assist the baggage handler who still has to manually handle it throughout the process. Additionally, working in an aircraft's luggage hold causes workers to adopt a stooped position making the movement of heavy bags all the more difficult.

Modern suitcases are designed to be wheeled across floors not handled by workers and it is the excessive weight and repetition of movement that is causing injury.

The HSE also recommended that airlines introduce a range of measures to help reduce injuries, including devices providing mechanical assistance as well as safe working practices such as work rotation.

The reality is these changes require significant capital investment and an increase in staffing levels and because of the pressures of operating in a highly competitive deregulated market with minimum aircraft turnaround times these have not been implemented.

As a consequence of the HSE's failure to regulate baggage handlers continue to suffer preventable injuries.

### Environmental benefits

Lighter bags equate to lighter planes resulting in less fuel use and lower carbon admissions. If every passenger on a single Boeing 747 travelled with 23 kg not 32 kg it would save the same amount of emissions as removing over 30 private cars from the road for a year.

We call upon you to;

- Sign the early day motion on 'injuries to airport baggage handlers'.
- Pressure the government to act and force the HSE to implement, by way of uniform UK sector level regulation, a reduction in checked-in baggage weight to 23 kg per item.
- Support our call for government to fund a public awareness campaign encouraging the travelling public to 'lighten up', assisting our campaign on worker health and reducing the industry's carbon footprint.
- Support our campaign by publicising our 'lighten up' strategy in your constituency.
- Join us in Parliament Square at 12.30 on the 25 March 2009 to take part in our 'baggage challenge' and photo opportunity prior to our lobby in Committee Room 11 at 2.30 pm.