

Resolution by the Aerospace Medical Association

AIRCREW FATIGUE COUNTERMEASURES: INFLIGHT IN-COCKPIT NAPPING

WHEREAS: Fatigue has been identified as the largest preventable cause of mishaps in transportation operations and specifically as a causal factor in 4-7 percent of aviation accidents, and;

WHEREAS: Personnel reductions, increased work pressures and current fatigue management science have made the management of aircrew fatigue a top priority for the airlines, the pilot unions, and the Federal Aviation Administration; and

WHEREAS: Although absence of sleep deprivation and short awake intervals prior to assuming flight crew duties should be assured by policy and procedures, insufficient sleep has been identified as the primary contributor to air crew operational fatigue; and

WHEREAS: During extended range flights, naps ranging from 20 minutes to 120 minutes have been scientifically proven to safely bolster alertness in a variety of circumstances, and a NASA study (on 3-member crews) determined that 40-minute in-seat, in-flight napping opportunities (affording an average of 26 minutes of sleep) during cruise segments enhanced performance and reduced pilot sleepiness during subsequent critical flight phases;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Aerospace Medical Association strongly recommends that regulatory agencies, in consultation with aerospace medicine and fatigue experts, establish policies and procedures to ensure adequate preflight crew rest and criteria for the use of in-flight, in-cockpit napping when safe to do so, during extended flight operations, to avoid fatigue and enhance aircrew performance.