

The Features of Cabin-Crew Food Safety Training: A Content Analysis

Ayman Safi Abdelhakim*¹ and Elizabeth C. Redmond²

¹Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Fayoum University, Fayoum, Egypt.

²ZERO2FIVE Food Industry Centre, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cardiff, United Kingdom.

*Corresponding author: asf01@fayoum.edu.eg

Introduction

Cabin crew have a range of food service-related duties on-board¹ and food safety training is required to reduce risks of malpractice. To be effective, the features of food safety training should be based on a training needs analysis, job analysis and trainees' characteristics. Food safety training features, including content, type/ nature, methods, delivery, context, certification and recurrence of training may influence potential effectiveness.

Substantial research has been conducted on food handler's food safety training in different sectors of catering industry, however, limited data has been obtained related to cabin-crew food safety training².

Aims

This study aimed to explore and identify the different features of cabin-crew food safety training among international airlines.

Methods

- **Sampling and recruitment:** A purposive sampling technique alongside a snowballing technique was adopted for sampling and recruitment of 18 respondents from international airlines.
- **In depth interviews:** Semi-structured interviews (n=18) were conducted with cabin crew managers and trainers to explore and describe features of cabin crew food safety training in different airlines. Qualitative data sought included the level and content of training, duration, source and methods of training.
- **Document analysis:** A document analysis was undertaken using cabin crew training manuals and training materials; collated data was classified, coded and categorized using NVivo12 (QSR).
- **Interview analysis:** Digital interview recordings were transcribed and coded using NVivo12 (QSR). Data analysis used a qualitative content analysis approach.
- **Ethical considerations:** Prior to implementation of this study, all methods and relevant documentation were approved by Fayoum University (2019).

Results and Discussion

A summary of interview and document analysis findings is presented below. Overall, results indicated variable approaches to food safety training among different airlines.

Level of cabin crew food safety training

All participating airlines (n=18) did not consider different cabin crew roles and reportedly trained their cabin crew at the same level regardless of "...which fleet or class they are working on" (A2RDLCLA1).

"all members of the crew have the same training" (A17CCTS)

"all cabin crew are trained on the same level without discrimination or customisation" (A6CCTS).

Content of cabin crew food safety training

Document analysis determined the following common topics included in cabin crew food safety training:

- Personal hygiene, including hand-washing protocol.
- Complaints reporting ,e.g., allergies, food poisoning; Policies for eating and drinking in the galley and layovers.
- Cleaning and sanitising food contact surfaces on-board; Temperature control: receiving, storing, reheating & serving; Holding foods for different service protocol on-board; safe serving procedures; procedures for handling waste and left over food.
- Types of chemicals on-board: safely store & use.
- The relationship between personal hygiene and the spread of disease; preventing, controlling and monitoring methods of contamination.
- In-flight HACCP and documentation; The ISO 22000:2005 as food safety management systems; Special meals comprehension and allergen information.
- Food handlers' fitness to work; Microbiology and food poisoning
- Ice hazards; Water sanitation and borne-disease in-flight and down route.

Materials used for cabin crew food safety training

78% airlines utilised Microsoft Powerpoint slides and handouts; 39% used videos; 83% used newsletters; 11% used E-modules

Most (78%) airlines trained their cabin crew theoretically off-the-job; only 22% conducted 'on-the-job' food safety training.

Time and duration of cabin crew food safety training delivery

- All of the airlines, (n=18) reportedly included food safety instruction/training for cabin crew during 'induction training' and specifically during the 'food service training modules'. For example "... referring to the training time; it was undertaken during the initial training of the service module" (A1DCS).
- Duration of training regarding specific food safety issues was 30mins-1hour for 28% of airlines (up to 5-8hours for 5% airlines).
- Duration for unspecific food safety training was indicated to be during first aid, 'grooming' and initial training for 44% of airlines represented in this study.

Source of training – in house / external

- The majority of the airlines (83%) considered cabin crew food safety training to be a subset of food service training.
- All of the airlines depended on in-house training:

"We train in-house. Our airline is happy to have our own training centre with all necessary facilities and equipment both for safety and service training" (A6 CCST1)

Methods of training delivery

- 67% airlines conducted training in a classroom with an instructor
- 22% airlines conducted 'on-the-job' instructions, during briefings and flights.
- 11% airlines who participated in the study conducted individually-based computer-based training approaches.
- Most (67%) airlines reportedly did not update / repeat cabin crew food safety training

Conclusions

- This study determined that features of cabin crew food safety training are variable between airlines. Improved consistency in training approaches based on risk analysis and the type of in-flight food service may improve training effectiveness.
- Different timings, approaches, content and materials used for cabin-crew training may influence potential effectiveness of instruction and awareness of food safety behaviours. Absence of effective food safety training among cabin-crew may result in failure to control on-board food safety hazards.

References

1. Sheward, E. (2006). *Aviation food safety*. Blackwell Pub.;
2. Abdelhakim, A. S., Jones, E., Redmond, E., Hewedi, M., & Seaman, P. (2019). Cabin crew food safety training: A qualitative study. *Food Control*, 96, 151-157



Cardiff
Metropolitan
University

Prifysgol
Metropolitan
Caerdydd

Food Industry Centre
Cardiff Metropolitan University
ZERO2FIVE
Food & Drink Research Unit
Uned Ymchwil Bwyd a Diod
Canolfan Diwydiant Bwyd
Prifysgol Metropolitan Caerdydd



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