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NEWS CANADA

Canadian government stalling on battling aviation fatigue: pilot

By David P. Ball, 24 hours Vancouver
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(QMI AGENCY FILE PHOTO)

Canada is stalling when it comes to preventing exhausted pilots from flying, says a veteran airline captain.

Concerns around pilot fatigue have been raised for years, but the federal government still falls behind other countries in allowing pilots to fly long hours, according to the Canadian board president of the Air Line Pilots Association International.

“Right now, Canada has some of the most lax rules in world,” Capt. Dan Adamus, who has 30 years of experience, told 24 hours.

He said pilots are allowed to fly 14 hours in a day, and in “unforeseen circumstances” can operate an airplane up to 17 hours. Adamus sat on a government board to suggest reforms for more than a year, alongside representatives of the airline industry, Transport Canada and other experts.

“For 1.5 years, we met almost every month, we came up with recommendations for change,” he said. “Unfortunately, those recommendations have been sitting on the director general's desk for over a year now.”

A spokesperson for Transport Canada confirmed pilots max-out at 14 hours per day, adding that there are also caps of 100 hours a month, and 1,200 hours per year.

“Transport Canada takes flight crew fatigue management seriously,” an unsigned emailed statement read. “The department has had the current safety regulations in place since 1996 for flight time, flight duty time and rest periods for flight crews ... The department monitors compliance with these regulations and does not hesitate to take enforcement action if non-compliance is identified.”

The statement added that the ministry is reviewing its regulations based on new international standards, but Adamus asked why Canada does not follow the lead of the U.S. or Europe in cutting hours. The one positive step, he said, is that Transport Canada wants to maintain the same standards for all pilots, regardless of whether they are a major national carrier or small fishing camp planes, he said.

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It's worth noting that the 100 hour monthly and 1200 hour yearly maximums alluded to in the article apply to *flying* hours only, and do not include non-flying duties such as pre-flight and post-flight checks and other essential aspects of a pilot's job, which can take up a significant portion of the 14-hour daily maximum.

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