

Comments on Ofcom Consultation "Mobile Communications onboard Aircraft".

International Air Transport Association (IATA) 28 November 2007

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Ofcom consultation "Mobile Communications onboard Aircraft". IATA represents 243 of the world's airlines carrying 94% of international scheduled traffic and 40% of manufactured goods. Approximately 130 of our members fly through UK airspace and 6 of our members are UK based.

Whilst IATA will not be responding to the specific questions within the consultation, we would like to take the opportunity to clarify two points related to background statements therein.

Firstly, IATA believes that once airworthiness certification has been completed, the decision to equip and use an "MCA" system (to thus enable mobile phone use during flight) rests solely with the individual airline. In short, it is a commercial decision and IATA plays no role in the commercial decisions of its members.

Secondly, IATA has serious concerns over the following paragraphs that appear in the consultation:

" 5.3 Responsibility for ensuring that no adverse effects are possible rests with the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in parallel work streams. UK expertise in these groups is provided by the CAA.

5.4 These bodies are responsible for ensuring that all reasonable measures must be taken to ensure that no electronic device, including the aircraft base station, NCO and mobile telephones, can adversely affect the performance of the aircraft or its systems. These issues will be addressed through the airworthiness certification process, administered in the UK by the CAA on behalf of the EASA. It is essential that these issues are fully resolved before MCA systems could be allowed on any aircraft but this, as noted above, does not fall within Ofcom's remit."

IATA has neither the mandate nor the competency to get involved in any way with the airworthiness certification process. This is the responsibility of the relevant aviation safety authority (in Europe the European Aviation Safety Agency) and the concerned civil aviation administration.

The use of the MCA, with regard to safety of flight is an operational issue and thus the responsibility for ensuring non-interference with the aircraft or its systems lies with the provider and operator (airline) of such equipment.

It is very important that this is clear when consideration is given to use of MCA systems as safety is the number one priority of IATA and its Member airlines.