

ADVISORY INFORMATION 1/2023

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MEDICAL AWARENESS FOR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia (CAAM) plays a key role in promoting safety and security among its stakeholders; including pilots, engineers and air traffic controllers among many others.
- 1.2 Air traffic controllers' job functions entails a complex set of tasks requiring high levels of knowledge and expertise, as well as the practical application of specific skills relating to cognitive processing, logical reasoning, decision making and various aspects of communicative and human relations.
- 1.3 It is therefore necessary that air traffic controllers possess high intellectual and operative skills, in addition to maintaining good health (i.e. physically, emotionally and mentally) for safe, effective and efficient conduct of controller's role.
- 1.4 As per CAAM CAD 1 – Personnel Licensing and CAD 1004 – Medical Requirements, holders of air traffic controller licences are required to maintain Class 3 medical certificate and to attend medical evaluations periodically to ensure they are fit for operational duty. Failure in the medical examination can result in temporary suspension, loss of licence and undue stress.
- 1.5 This Advisory Information is issued to raise medical awareness among air traffic controllers and methods which can be adopted in managing the well-being of controllers.

2 Promotion of Health

- 2.1 Preventive health measures with proper medical care and monitoring are crucial in preserving the well-being and performance efficiency of air traffic controllers.
- 2.2 Here are some tips to keep fit, minimise fatigue and to maintain a healthy lifestyle—
 - a) When at work place and task structure:
 - 1) Improve working environment;
 - 2) Lighting conditions which favour optimal visual performance & visual contrast on the screen in order to prevent straining the eye. Follow the

20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at an object at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds;

- 3) Minimise noise disturbance & prevent background noise (which may lead to risk of hearing loss in the long run), use insulating headsets and more sensitive microphones;
- 4) Microclimate conditions and maintain indoor air quality for thermal comfort (e.g. installing adequate air conditioning systems);
- 5) Arranging workplaces according to ergonomic criteria;
- 6) Working with visual displays units. Radar screen should be placed or adjusted to a height, distance and angle at the best working positions to prevent prolonged strain or contraction of the neck muscles, excessive visual discomfort and fatigue; and
- 7) Prolonged, constrained sitting posture may lead to muscular-skeletal discomfort and pain, especially at the neck, shoulders, spine and lumbar tract. It is important to use suitable chairs (e.g. adjustable in height and angle, padding with lumbar support and headrest) which allows for comfortable sitting postures while working.

b) When at home and personal strategies:

- 1) Maintain good physical fitness and emotionally stable psychic conditions and overcoming stress;
 - i) Carry out physical exercises regularly and in a non-competitive manner (e.g. 20 or 30 minutes of fairly vigorous aerobic exercises such as running, walking, or swimming three or four times a week).
- 2) Proper eating habits;
 - i) Have a balanced diet by having light and easy-digested meals before and during work can support work performance, prevent drops in mental efficiency and drowsiness during duty periods.
 - ii) Adhere to usual meal times (a good synchroniser of body functions).
 - iii) Eating light meals, no later than two hours before going to sleep. Avoid caffeinated drinks and alcohol before sleep.
 - iv) Enjoy a balanced, varied of diet that includes fresh vegetables and fruits, whole grain breads and cereals, beans and peas, skinless chicken and turkey, fish, skim milk products. Be aware of the adverse effects of excessive sugar, salt, and fats intake in fast food.
- 3) Sleeping patterns;
 - i) Keeping a tight sleeping schedule while on shift and night work, as much as possible, avoiding disturbances (e.g. arranging the bedroom so that it is as silent and dark as possible, using ear plugs, make arrangements with family members).
 - ii) Avoid use of sleeping pills and only under medical control.
 - iii) Relax before going to sleep (e.g. light exercise, reading, listening to music, etc.)

- 4) Relaxation techniques; and
 - i) Practice yoga, meditation, massages and autogenous training (i.e. relaxation techniques) to aid in combating against restlessness, anxiety, muscular tension, insomnia and stress.
- 5) Leisure time activities;
 - i) Adopt leisure or recreational activities, either individually (e.g. reading, listening to music, fishing, etc.) or group activities (e.g. team games and social groups) which promotes both physical and mental health.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 Due to the highly specific requirements and competencies that are required of an air traffic controllers, it is therefore vital that an air traffic controller maintains a healthy body and a healthy lifestyle. Throughout their career, it is the responsibility of the air traffic controllers to maintain valid licences and to meet the necessary medical requirements. Therefore, good medical surveillance is equally important in ensuring that air traffic controllers remain in good health and that they are able to carry out their job without unnecessary stress or health problems.



CAPTAIN NORAZMAN MAHMUD
Chief Executive Officer
for Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia
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