



Guidance for Crew Members Regarding Prescription Medications

General Information

As safety-sensitive employees of Delta Airlines, Flight Attendants are subject to both Department of Transportation (DOT) and DAL rules on the use of prescription medications. Delta's guidelines regarding these medications are very clear!! If you take prescription medications, specific precautions are necessary. Please read the following tips for information.

Delta Policy

DAL's policy on using prescription medications while on duty can be found in the OnBoard Manual in Section 5.5 19. It states, in part:

“Delta policy prohibits FAs from performing flight duties or training while taking prescription or over-the-counter (OTC) medications that adversely affect their ability to perform proficiently and/or safely.

Medications taken while on duty or prior to reporting for duty must be limited to those that will in no way impair or alter normal functions or reactions. Any medications that cause drowsiness, nervousness or any other work-impairing side effect while on duty are strictly forbidden and their use may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.”

Prescription Medications While Flying

If you are concerned about whether you are okay to fly while taking a certain prescription, or whether any medication will result in a positive drug test, DO YOUR HOMEWORK!!! Proactively call:

(a) Sandy Taylor at DAL's Air Crew and Passenger Health Service (ACPHS) at 404-715-2654, or

(b) The International EAP office at 1-800-424-2406

The staff will discuss the medications and any side effects on a confidential, case-by-case basis.

Recommendations Around Prescription Drug Use

- BE PROACTIVE and do your homework!! Read DAL's Drug and Alcohol policy, available on DeltaNet. Just type "drug and alcohol policy" into the search window.
- Only use medications for which you have a current prescription from a medical doctor who is actively treating you.
- Never exceed the recommended dosage or the interval level for any medication.
- Make sure your treating doctor knows about your safety-sensitive duties and has approved the use of these medications while performing these duties.
- Don't take medications prescribed for past conditions.
- Never share your medications or borrow medications from others.

Over-the-Counter Products (especially herbs and homeopathic remedies)

The caution here is: buyer beware!! You are responsible for knowing what is contained in the products you use.

Unfortunately, some products have no labels. Some ingredient labels are incomplete, unreadable or incomprehensible at best. This is especially important overseas, where many products, like herbal remedies and teas, contain chemicals which are illegal in the U.S. If you are not absolutely sure what ingredients are present in a product, check with a pharmacist or physician. If you are unable to come up with a definitive answer, don't use the product.

Internet Prescriptions

In 2006 the DOT issued guidelines authorizing "an employee's prescription for medication obtained over the Internet if there is proof that a legitimate doctor-patient relationship has been established."

Four elements generally serve as an indication that such a relationship exists: the patient has a medical complaint; a medical history has been taken; a physical exam has been performed; and there is a logical connection between the complaint, the history, the physical exam and the drug prescribed. Standing alone, the completion of an online questionnaire reviewed later by a pharmacy-employed doctor fails to establish a proper doctor-patient relationship. It is the employee's responsibility to provide sufficient documentation to address MRO (Medical Review Officer) inquiries about a doctor-patient relationship.

Drug Testing

If you are drug tested and get a positive lab result, it does not necessarily mean that you have a DOT violation! Before the lab test result can be reported to the company, the MRO must first contact you to see if your lab test positive was the result of taking a legal medication prescribed by a licensed physician treating you for a current condition. If it appears there is a medical explanation for the lab test positive, you will be required to provide proof of a legal prescription within 72 hours of the call from the MRO (i.e. photocopy of bottle or prescription). If the MRO concludes that your lab test positive was the result of a legally prescribed medication, the result will be verified to the company as a negative result. Again, remember: a lab test positive is deemed negative when there is a legitimate medical explanation and supporting documentation for the result.

PLEASE NOTE: there is only one exception to this rule...marijuana. Marijuana has been legalized for use in some states under certain medical situations. However, DOT policy and federal law do not recognize any legitimate medical use of marijuana. If you use medically prescribed marijuana, and test positive on a drug test at work, you will be considered a DOT rule violator. Bottom line - do not smoke dope or even use hemp products!

How do I get help for myself or a fellow crew member?

If you think you have a substance use problem, or if you are unsure if you have one, the most prudent and proactive thing you can do to avoid violating DOT and DAL rules is to get a professional evaluation.

If you're concerned about the well-being of a flying coworker, especially when it comes to a progressive and potentially fatal disease process like alcoholism or drug addiction, we urge you to contact your local EAP peer representative for confidential guidance.

In both cases, AFA EAP is a confidential resource for you. Contact your local EAP peer representative at www.nwaafa.org under the Committees tab or call the International EAP office at 1-800-424-2406. You can also go to www.afanet.org and follow the links to the EAP section of the website.

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