

SURVIVAL TRAINING IN AIRLINES

–

A CHALLENGE FOR INSTRUCTORS

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Introduction

The content of this paper is based on my survival training experience in the Finnish Air Force, US Navy and Finnair Safety Training. The geographical situation of Finland gives Finnish people an opportunity to experience cold winters and warm (but short) summers. With right clothing and equipment winter in Finland is excellent time for outdoor activities.

Scenarios

Crews could need survival skills at least on following situations:

- Forced landing into water or wilderness (Very rare occurrence)
- Emergency diversion to remote airfield due to serious technical problem etc. (Possible)
- Runway excursion to water or snow.

We all know clothing of crews and passengers is normally light; small shoes etc. Even an hour spent outdoors in cold with that clothing could cause frostbites.

Survival situation in cold

Clear order of tasks:

- First aid
- Get warm
- Seek or build shelters
- Use and/or build signals

How to do all this with 100 – 300 passengers?

To handle big crowd of people they must be divided to small groups lead by crewmembers. These crewmembers must have leadership and survival skills to manage the difficult situation.

Availability of standard survival equipment maybe limited.

Crewmembers must use their imagination to collect useful items from the wreckage. Items could be:

- Kerosine to make a fire
- Seat cushions for protection
- Pillows

- Airplane parts for shelter

If crewmembers have seen and studied examples how to protect from cold, it is much more easier to lead a group of people in stressful situation.

Training aspects

It is quite unrealistic to plan survival training in real environment to all pilots and cabin crew of an airline. Normally their training is limited to water survival training in swimming pool (better than nothing) and classroom training about arctic survival and hypothermia. We have to focus on survival instructor's skills to improve quality of emergency training.

By providing "real" survival training to instructors they can improve their teaching skills dramatically.

During survival training they will:

- Physically experience cold water and/or climate.
- Learn different ways how to make fire.
- Learn how to personally protect from cold.
- Learn different ways how to build a shelter.
- Experience how difficult it is to control people / to lead a group in wilderness.
- Improve their CRM skills how to work as team in abnormal environment.

After the training instructors have a new approach to survival training. They have a good motivation and expertise which they can share with students in classroom.

In addition to real survival training to instructors Finnair has provided survival / leadership training to Chief of Cabin courses in wilderness with very good results.

Conclusion

In everyday life our customers measure the quality of an airline by how good is food, is the wine tasty, is the service good etc.

But how well airline employees can handle an emergency situation including evacuation and survival, then the real professionalism counts, because it saves lives.