

BEING **FATIGUED** AT ENVOY™

Written by

Amanda Miller

MEC Grievance Committee Chairperson
AFA-CWA, AFL-CIO

John Carlos Metidieri

AFA System Board of Adjustment
AFA-CWA, AFL-CIO

At one point or another in our careers, it is inevitable that we are going to experience fatigue to such an extent that we cannot safely perform our duties as Flight Attendants. We endure disruptions to our rest at the overnight hotel making it impossible to secure proper rest. Our schedules are impacted by events out of our control causing a perfectly normal workday to extend into hellish hours. There comes a point when, for our own safety as well as the safety of our coworkers and customers, we must remove ourselves from flight duty in order to secure proper rest.

Our Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) contains language on the establishment of a Fatigue Review Board that deals with situations of fatigue on the job. It is found under Section 26, paragraph M. The Flight Attendant will notify the Captain and the Company that she/he is too fatigued to continue flying. The absence will be recorded as a UA until the Company makes an initial decision as to whether or not the absence is attributable to fatigue. Absences attributable to fatigue will be coded accordingly. Absences the Company finds not attributable to fatigue are coded as Missed Assignments. Each quarter, the Fatigue Review Board will meet to evaluate absences coded as Missed Assignments and attempt to reach a mutual determination as to the proper coding of the absence. In cases of a deadlock, the Company's determination will be final but will be subject to the grievance procedures.

The AFA experience with this language, unfortunately, is that a considerably number of absences under Section 26.M. are ruled by the Company to be not attributable to fatigue. While every case is unique, we have found that certain conditions have resulted in absences being attributable to fatigue in the eyes of the Company on a fairly regular basis. Such examples include (but are not limited to) noise that can be substantiated (such as parties, alarms and evacuations) at the overnight hotel or reduced rest overnights followed by extremely long duty days.

Examples of absences under Section 26.M. that could be denied by the Company as being attributable to fatigue include (but are not limited to) not being able to sleep on exceptionally long overnights or complaints of noise that cannot be substantiated. Calling in fatigued because one did not have a meal break will most likely not be accepted as attributable to fatigue. There is a provision in the CBA under Section 27.F.3 allowing for a Flight Attendant to take a meal break during the duty day.

The Association cannot stress enough the importance of documentation to substantiate claims of fatigue. The Company is not merely going to take our word for it. For example, if your rest was interrupted by a hotel noise disturbance such as an alarm, record the time of the alarm and ask the hotel for a short statement stating that an alarm

was sounded. If your rest was interrupted by noise from a source immediately outside of your room, call the front desk of the layover hotel to complain. Record the time of the call and **the name of the employee with whom you spoke**. The Association even recommends calling the front desk from your personal cell phone so that you have your own proof that a call was actually made so that there is no need to obtain such proof from the hotel. The hotel phone numbers are usually printed on the hotel phones placed in our rooms. As always, please submit a complaint of the noise disturbance in the CrewCare system on Jetnet as further documentation of the interrupted rest. These reports are sent to the Association as well as to the Company.

We understand how difficult it can be to make the decision to remove ourselves from a flight assignment. We are worried about the Attendance Control Policy and how many points we have. We will not know the outcome of such requests until several weeks after we have already been removed from the assignment. It is no secret to our flight attendants that the consequences are severe are if we are found by the Company to be sleeping on the job. Nonetheless, it is still critical to ensure that we work as safely as possible. Should you have any questions, please contact your LEC Representatives for more information.