

1999 NAFPI FOD Conference
Airline/Airport Open Forum Discussion Summary
Subject: Education and Awareness
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Some airlines and airports have excellent FOD prevention training programs for their employees. There was, however, concern expressed during this discussion that many people are trained on their specific function but not about more general topics including FOD prevention. Many employees have never been told what FOD is or what the benefits are, to them and their company, by keeping their areas FOD free. Often, managers and supervisors think that employees are trained, but in reality, they have not received any instruction. Workers should receive annual training at a minimum and the completion of this training should be recorded. Training the new employee is also critical. Often, when training new employees, the subject of FOD gets buried in other operations training and is perhaps not given the importance it deserves.

Many organizations use a combination of a video and written information for training. The entire course should last no longer than 30-40 minutes, with a video not exceeding 10 minutes. The subject of the course should focus on a single aspect of FOD prevention. Creation of more than one training session to cover different subjects is essential. For example, covering ramp FOD and FOD generated during a 'C' check should be handled in separate videos and/or training sessions. Keep it short and know your target audience. FOD prevention should be incorporated into other training sessions as well. For example, when vehicle operators are trained, information about FOD prevention can be included in that training as well.

To show the consequences, instructors should provide examples of FOD and include items such as fan blades that have been damaged. Most employees find it easy to understand the effects of "hard" FOD such as rocks, wood and metal items, but fail to make the connection to "soft" FOD like paper, foam and plastics. Special emphasis should be placed on these items. The danger of FOD and jet blast is also a subject that should be discussed fully. An example was given of an employee who was struck by a foam earplug that became a projectile by jet blast. He ended up with a bruised cheek bone. Ramp workers should be trained about the importance of ensuring dumpsters are closed to keep trash from blowing out onto the airport and wildlife activities to a minimum. Another concern is breaking down loads in the airplane or on the ramp. This causes wood and plastic debris to be generated. Also, pads that are used to soak up spills can also become FOD if left behind after their purpose has been served.

Many times there is a challenge to airlines because they must not only develop the culture within their own company, but foster it to the external vendors that

maintain their aircraft and assist with operations as well. Some mechanics have been tasked with training support personnel on the ramp. Since the trained mechanics have a good understanding of FOD and its consequences, they can communicate a sense of urgency to the support personnel. This type of training is not only advantageous to the workforce being trained, but further emphasizes the message to the trainer.

Contractor training is also important. Construction workers need to be trained on FOD and expectations for FOD prevention clearly communicated to them. Construction companies should have a FOD training program for their employees working at airports and special emphasis must be placed on continual construction clean-up and FOD containment.

Education must be backed up with “walking the talk”. Some airports and tenants have formed airport FOD committees. This committee works to promote awareness. They make sure that the items communicated to the airport community personnel are germane and easy to comprehend. FOD committee members can communicate those items of concern to their organizations at the airport and with their whole company to share items even further. Since airports are communities of aviation organizations, one organization’s FOD program can effect the other organizations in the community. This is why it is an excellent idea to work together to keep awareness levels high.

Corporate objectives should be very clear where FOD is concerned. Metrics used to track FOD incidents and costs can help to give the company visibility as to the present health of their program. Communication of corporate goals and expectations must be made clear to their employees. Wherever possible, FOD incidents should be translated into dollars spent. The expenditure of money is something that every employee can understand.

Many organizations keep FOD that is collected and record where it was found. Conveying this information to the employees, especially when problem areas noted are under the employees’ control, can be a powerful tool in eliminating problems. Flyers can be produced on certain FOD incidents or problems and distributed over e-mail to convey lessons learned. These flyers can be used in crew meetings or briefings. Caution should always be exercised to keep this information as “sterile” as possible so as not to bring about poor publicity for those organizations that are willing to share and educate others. All livery, airport signs and identifiers should be removed.

To promote FOD awareness, it important to establish a theme and execute a campaign. Posters, banners and employee recognition items can be produced at relatively small costs when compared to FOD damage. Displays shown at different locations can be effective. One airport patrol gives out coffee coupons when employees are noted cleaning an area. Cash prizes work and so do

recognition awards. Awards given to employees should be done in front of their peers and emphasis placed on FOD prevention importance within the organization. Small bulletins or posters can be sent out frequently -- once every two or three weeks by e-mail for awareness. Keep fresh material circulating constantly to keep information from getting stale. Banners should be moved around so they don't become "wall paper" and go unnoticed by airport workers. Company FOD summits and web sites are also excellent tools to communicate best practices.

Annual FOD walks at the airport can be a good education and awareness tool. It is important for employees to realize that FOD prevention is not just something that their company is working on, but other companies are concerned with as well. It is vital to the program that company executives participate, not only in annual FOD walks, but whenever possible. Executives can serve as an example to employees that we all have a responsibility to do this clean-up and that it is certainly not beneath anyone to perform these tasks. At one major airport, a "FOD Week" was coordinated and sections of the runway were shut down for the FOD walk. Demonstrations of wildlife management were shown so that participants gained an understanding of what the airport was doing to eliminate wildlife FOD. The gathering of these employees, in a key position on the airport, also generated a lot of airport interest

Some airport tenants hold FOD picnics and share the cost of the event. People have fun and learn about FOD prevention. One airline sponsored a holiday decorating contest. Employees were encouraged to gather foreign objects to decorate a Christmas tree or wreath. These were photographed and entries submitted by e-mail for judging by the president and vice-president of the company. Prizes were awarded to the winning organizations. These types of activities promote pride and teaming.

Sometimes people can learn by teaching. During an adopt-a-runway program, where local civic organizations became involved, employees were asked to teach them about the importance of FOD prevention. ROTC, Boy Scout and Explorer groups have been used successfully to help clean airports by performing FOD walks. They enjoy the opportunity to participate at the airport and sometimes are given promotional items from the different organizations at the airport. This interaction not only helps with awareness but establishes good publicity for the airport community. Caution must be used for these types of programs to ensure local laws and airport regulations are adhered to. It is essential to work with the airport and company public relations offices so that possible media exposure is handled correctly.

Getting people involved in FOD prevention is a challenge. If it is introduced when an employee is first hired and continually emphasized, it is much easier to ensure participation than when it is introduced at a later date. It is also important

for management to be involved in the training process.
Management's participation, emphasis in daily management, support of FOD
focals and willingness to lead by example are critical to the success of any FOD
program.