

crossing the North Atlantic

For Piedmont to inaugurate transatlantic service, employees in many departments have gone back to school to learn international rules. One such example is dispatch, part of our Airline Operations Control Center (AOCC), which is responsible for following the 767-200 on its voyages across the ocean.

Operating on time our goal

The Boeing 767-200 not only takes Piedmont into the new skies of widebody aircraft, but presents new challenges in keeping our on-time performance record as best as possible.

These challenges range from its sheer size to special international handling procedures, and our personnel have been training since January to make sure the flights are smooth and, of course, on time.

"All those involved in the training say we can have a quick turn-around with the 767," Jim Tabor, manager-system performance, said.

A major factor that will help this performance is the advanced technology in the cockpit. An advanced flight deck features digital electronics that include an Engine Indicating and Crew Alerting System (EICAS) and Electronic Flight Instrument System (EFIS) for superior crew information and status reports on the aircraft's performance. With the latest information, pilots can quickly make accurate operational decisions affecting their flight. In addition, the 767-200 has FAA Category III low weather minimum equipment, enabling it to operate in weather conditions that would ground less advanced aircraft.

Underneath the 767 are two cargo compartments that also take Piedmont into a new era of baggage and cargo handling—containerized shipping. All freight and baggage will be divided by destination and

loaded into containers before being placed on the aircraft, thus minimizing baggage movement. Advantages of the containers include minimal agent time in placing luggage on the aircraft, an important issue when processing the baggage of up to 210 passengers on a single flight.

Carl Crumley, director-passenger procedures, said one probable challenge in handling baggage is an expected regulation for "positive matching" of passengers with their luggage on international flights from the United States. The FAA now requires positive matching—ensuring that a passenger who checks in luggage on a flight actually boards the flight—for all inbound trips to the United States. Canada also requires positive matching of luggage, so Piedmont has some experience in the area. The expected regulation from the International Civil Aviation Organization could take effect as early as December, and Piedmont is already making plans to accommodate the extra time it could require.

"We're considering a modified version of the manual system we'll use at Gatwick if the regulation occurs by December," Crumley said. "If the regulation is delayed for a year, we should have an automated procedure that will be even more efficient."

Another issue that could affect the 767's on-time performance is the large number of people it can

accommodate. Our agents are prepared to handle the volume at the ticket counter, and at the gate the twin-aisle features of the widebody will help agents quickly board passengers. Extra care will be made to minimize duplicate seating, as the chances of that occurring increase with larger aircraft.

CLT will be a maintenance base with a special focus on scheduled 767 maintenance, so any maintenance problems with the 767 at our largest hub should be quickly addressed. In addition, Piedmont maintenance will be able to work on the 767 wherever it overnights. Maintenance personnel have already trained on the widebody and will be ready when the 767 enters scheduled service June 15.

Tabor said that with on-time performance affected by so many areas of operations, even the smallest details can't be overlooked. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is requiring that a trash incinerator be built at CLT to burn international garbage after inbound flights from London. A delay in processing trash could lead to a delay in the aircraft's performance.

"Those are the kinds of things we haven't been used to dealing with and we're having to learn," Tabor said. "But we're confident that our procedures and the 767's capabilities will keep it on schedule."

Flight already routine for Piedmont's dispatchers

By the time our new Charlotte-London service begins June 15, flying the route will be routine for Piedmont's dispatchers.

This spring, AOCC (Airline Operations Control Center) set up an international desk, and for the past two months, dispatch has made "paper" trips daily to and from Gatwick to familiarize the department with international rules.

"We've treated these trips as if they were real," Ross Gordon, director-flight control, said, "and the FAA has continually checked our work. If we don't follow the rules precisely, the FAA will turn us into a pumpkin real quick."

Because the flight is over water, the service to London requires new procedures never before used by Piedmont. And because we're so new in the transatlantic market, we are required to follow additional rules until we have more experience in international service.

"Ours is a special case," Gordon explained. "Our flight will be the first two-engine operation with a 767-200 Extended Range powered by these General Electric engines. Because transatlantic service is new to us, we are also under a 75-minute rule which requires that we never be more than 75 minutes from an adequate airport. The purpose is to keep a safety belt around us."

In order to meet the 75-minute requirement, our London flight will depart Charlotte and fly up the coast by Albany, NY, and Bangor, ME, to Goose Bay, Newfoundland, before heading across the Atlantic. The eight-hour, five-minute flight will cover approximately 3,400 miles.

Initially, our flights will not be on

the North Atlantic track system which is governed by the International Airline Track Center which houses major carriers at different altitudes. Piedmont is required to stay a few degrees clear of this system, which is governed by the winds and changes daily.

"We have stringent requirements as we cross the Atlantic which require that we work out coordinates and follow these points precisely," Gordon explained. "We will know exactly where our aircraft is every minute of the flight, and we'll stay in contact with our 767 more frequently than with any other flight we offer."

Piedmont also has to fulfill stringent fuel requirements. Ross explained that fortunately, the 767-200 is one of the better aircraft to fly this new route.

"The fuel requirements are no problem," he said. "The 767-200 carries enough fuel to go to London and halfway back with a full load."

To prepare for the transatlantic flight, 32 of the 80 employees in dispatch have received extensive training for overwater flights. They attended TWA's North Atlantic International School in Kansas City and trained for two days with Air Canada. They also took part in a special weather-related training program in addition to an extensive five-day school required by the FAA.

Gordon added: "An expert from the FAA spent two grueling days with us, and when he finished examining our procedures, he was very complimentary of our people. We're now ready for London service to begin."



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The LD2 container (above), which holds 2,700 pounds, is the smallest container we load on the 767-200. We also have a LD8 container which can carry up to 5,400 pounds, a half pallet which can handle 5,535 pounds, and a full pallet which carries up to 11,250 pounds. All cargo will be loaded in a container or on a pallet except for an area in the bulk bin at the back of the aircraft where items such as PEP packages and live animals can be stored.

Structurally, the 767-200's maximum cargo weight capacity is approximately 45,000 pounds, more than three times that of the 727-200.

In the past two months, the cargo sales department has conducted blitzes and held receptions in Tampa, Charlotte, Raleigh/Durham, and London to promote our new aircraft and cargo service.