

ALA at a Glance

Number of pilots: 1,490

Operations: 95 destinations in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico with 800 daily departures, including 40 markets flown by Horizon Air, which provides feed traffic to Alaska Airlines under a capacity-purchase agreement. In 2013, Alaska Airlines added four new destination cities: Kansas City, Mo., and Salt Lake City, Utah, which are served by Alaska Airlines, and Colorado Springs, Colo., and Omaha, Neb., which are operated exclusively by a capacity-purchase agreement with SkyWest Airlines

Fleet: 131 Boeing 737s, including 24 -400s, 17 -700s, 61 -800s, 12 -900s, 11 -900ERs, 5 -400Cs, and 1 -400 freighter



Capt. Dan Hoffman and F/O Craig Davidson receive a tour of the Children's Therapy Center (CTC), a nonprofit organization in Burien, Wash., that provides therapy services for children from birth to age 18. Hoffman and Davidson are board members for the Alaska Airlines Pilots Charitable Fund, which made a grant that purchased several pieces of therapy equipment for the CTC.

Alaska

Collaborative Approach Benefits Pilots, Company

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On May 9, 2013, the Alaska Airlines pilots' Master Executive Council (MEC) Negotiating Committee reached an agreement in concept for a new contract—just a little more than a month past the April 1 contract amendable date. And in July, the pilots ratified that agreement, putting in place a new five-year contract that includes improvements in pay, greater ability for the pilots to adjust their schedules, and enhanced job security while preserving benefits.

Negotiations began in summer 2012, but the decision to pursue an agreement

that met the pilots' requirements by the amendable date came about in 2011, when—with the assistance of ALPA staff—the MEC developed its strategic plan that set goals and direction for both

negotiations and the future beyond that.

"That we reached an agreement so close to our amendable date that our pilots ratified is the result of the hard work of both our Negotiating Committee and management's negotiating team. Both parties took a collaborative approach to these negotiations, which benefited the pilots and our company," says Capt. Chris Notaro, the pilots' MEC chairman. "Our pilots saw improvements

without a lengthy delay, including pay increases that were effective on the amendable date. Management benefited by avoiding a period of labor uncertainty."

Since contract ratification, the MEC and management have continued their cooperative approach to solving problems. The MEC's Negotiating and Scheduling Committees have worked with management to integrate FAR Part 117 changes into the contract. The new agreement also contains commitments to engage in post-ratification discussions to modernize the section related to flight data recorders and to create a joint working group that will recommend whether scheduling flexibility can be enhanced through new technology. Both of these efforts likely will begin this year, after the new flight-time/duty-time rules are implemented.

The MEC's Scheduling Committee is also working regularly with Alaska's Crew Scheduling Department to monitor how the provisions of the contract are being applied, and is engaging with the company to find ways to continue to improve a pilot's ability to adjust his or her schedule while meeting the company's operational needs.

"If we find areas where improvements can be made without either side being harmed, it doesn't make sense to wait until the next time we open the entire contract to make those changes," says F/O Sean Hansen, the pilots' Negotiating Committee chairman. "We began incorporating these types of memorandums of

understanding and letters of agreement during Contract 2009, and this is something we are continuing during Contract 2013."

This approach resulted in additional improvements in November. The Scheduling Management Group—a pilot-management working group that reviews and works to resolve issues related to scheduling—and the pilots' Grievance Committee worked with management to reach precedent-setting grievance settlements and to clarify contract language. To ensure that pilots have access to those agreements, the MEC incorporated them into an electronic collective bargaining agreement, which is available on both the MEC website and in a tablet-friendly format.

This cooperative approach also prompted the MEC to invite Alaska's executive leaders to address the MEC during the MEC's quarterly meetings. Management attended MEC meetings in August and October to discuss Alaska's direction, challenges, and the company's business plans.

"These discussions, which are covered by nondisclosure agreements, and the candid dialogue that follows, allow the MEC to better plan for the future and improves its ability to more effectively address pilot issues," Notaro says.

The MEC is starting off 2014 by meeting in January, during which time it will review and update its strategic plan with the continuing goal of improving and protecting the lives and working conditions of Alaska Airlines' pilots. 