



Changes in the company's application of an FAA rule regarding advance drug testing notification methods have led to inconsistent and sometimes confusing or alarming procedures by local management. Last fall, we published information about the FAA's decision that ACARs was an unacceptable means to notify crewmembers inflight of a drug test to take place upon landing. What is missing, however, is an official communication from the company that details the new process, the reason for the change, and explaining how the procedure will be consistently applied from base to base.

Recently, we have received a higher-than-normal volume of reports about notification inconsistencies and problems. Generally, the notification messages are received from dispatch and conveyed by the pilots, but concerns remain about message content. Some members have received messages indicating company personnel would meet their flight, while assuring them it was not a family emergency. Unfortunately, others have not included that assurance, generating unnecessary alarm. Still others received no dispatch message at all, but were met by local personnel and advised of a test upon deplaning.

We are pushing the company for a standard script to be given to dispatch, always including the "non-emergency" piece. Additionally, logistics unique to each base necessitate a standard on-the-ground practice so flight attendants don't inadvertently miss an in-person notification. At some bases, for instance, personnel might not be at the aircraft door following an international flight. Designated testers might be stationed in one area attempting to locate their testee, while the Crewmember could depart Customs headed in a different direction, and never receive notification at all.