

LAX Alert

Improving Safety, Security and Service Standards at Los Angeles International Airport

Disability Rights Advocates, Workers File Federal Complaint Against Aero Port Services

On June 28, 2007, six disability rights and retiree organizations joined Aero Port Services (APS) workers in filing a complaint with the U.S. Department of Transportation against APS for failing to provide adequate training, as required by law, on how to assist passengers with disabilities. APS is contracted by Continental Airlines and the airlines of LAX's Tom Bradley International Terminal and provides a variety of passenger services.

Federal regulations require that airlines and their subcontractors ensure that their employees who deal with the traveling public receive trainings, including refresher trainings, if they interact with passengers with disabilities. Trainings should include procedures on how to properly and safely operate equipment used to accommodate individuals with a disability, and how to be aware and respond appropriately to individuals with a disability.

The complaint alleges that, since 2003, Aero Port Services has not provided a systematic way of training workers that provide services to passengers with disabilities, whether they require wheelchair assistance or other types of assistance. In addition, workers allege that many of the wheelchairs have broken footrests and brakes, creating conditions that risk injury to both passengers and workers.

The work of those who assist passengers with disabilities does not only entail pushing wheelchairs, but requires that they have proper training to assist those with other disabilities. Passenger Service workers at LAX must also exercise care in transferring passengers from their personal wheelchair to "aisle chairs" for boarding, lifting the aisle chairs and the passenger up the step into the plane, and then navigating the chair down the aisle and transferring the person into the seat, all in extremely tight spaces.

In the process, many things can go wrong. Without training, APS workers are concerned about what can happen to the passengers, and to themselves.

APS provides services to passengers on airlines like Mexicana, Qantas, Cathay Pacific, ANA and others. Why has APS chosen to apparently disregard the law and put passengers in jeopardy?

SEIU calls up LAX airlines to assure that their contractors respect workers' and passengers' rights, or hire responsible contractors that will!

Workers were joined by:

- American Association of People with Disabilities
- California Alliance for Retired Americans
- Community Resources for Independence (Santa Rosa, CA)
- Communities Actively Living Independent & Free (Los Angeles, CA)
- Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
- Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy
- Protection & Advocacy, Inc.
- SEIU Local 1877



APS employee Tim Maddox discusses lack of training while Lillibeth Navarro, disability rights advocate, looks on.

If you have questions, would like a copy of the DOT complaint, or would like to subscribe to LAX Alert, please email lea@seiulocal1877.org, or call (213) 673-2210