

UNLIMITED LIABILITY LIMITS ON INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS APPROVED

From U.S. Dept. of Transportation

■ (WASHINGTON) The Department of Transportation this week approved agreements to allow U.S. and foreign airlines to implement on an interim basis three agreements waiving the Warsaw Convention's liability limit for injury or death on international flights.

"With today's action we are taking a historic step towards realizing President Clinton's goal of allowing victims and their families to receive appropriate compensation for airline accidents without facing the prospect of decades of litigation," Secretary of Transportation Federico Pena said. "Our quick action to allow the agreement to take effect will allow the traveling public to benefit immediately from the carriers' voluntary action while we explore ways to further protect passengers on international flights."

"I want to thank the victims' families for their tireless efforts to attain a better system for compensation."

The department's decision, which is effective immediately, will permit passengers and their families to recover the full amount of damages incurred on international flights of signatory carriers without any limit. Under the previous standard they were limited to \$75,000 unless they could prove that the carrier was guilty of "willful misconduct," an extreme form of gross negligence.

The department deferred action on a number of conditions it proposed in its Oct. 3 show cause order tentatively approving the agreements. DOT said that it would allow passengers to benefit immediately from the carriers' voluntary waiver of the limits while it considers ways to enhance the agreement.

The 1971 Montreal/Guatemala Protocols to amend the Warsaw Convention, together with a proposed supplemental compensation

plan, would have effectively eliminated the limits for U.S. passengers. However, Congress failed to ratify the protocols and the effort to provide American passengers with a fairer standard stalled. Determined to take a new approach, in February 1995 the department granted authority to the Air Transport Association of America and the International Air Transport Association to develop agreements that would meet department-specified guidelines.

U.S. carriers signing the agreement are Alaska Airlines, Allegheny Airlines, American Airlines, American Trans Air, AM Eagle, AMR Combs BJS, Continental Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Hawaiian Airlines, Kiwi International Airlines, Midwest Express Airlines, Northwest Airlines, Piedmont Airlines, PSA Airlines, Reeve Aleutian Airways, Trans World Airlines, United Airlines, UPS Airlines and USAir.

Foreign carriers signing the agreement are Aer Lingus, Aeromexpress, Aeromexico, Air Afrique, Air Aruba, Air Baltic, Air

Canada, Air Exel Commuter, Air France, Air Mauritius, Air New Zealand, Air UK, Air Vanuatu, All Nippon Airways, Augsburg Airways, Austrian Airlines, Azerbaijan Hava Vollary, British Airways, Canadian Airlines International, Cathay Pacific Airways, Cimber Air, Croatia Airlines, Crossair, Deutsche BA Luftfahrtgesellschaft, Deutsche Lufthansa, Egyptair, Finnair, Garuda Indonesia, GB Airways, Iberia, Icelandair, Japan Air System, Japan Airlines, Jet Airways (India), Kenya Airways, KLM Cityhopper, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Korean Air Lines, LAPSA Lineas Aereas Paraguayas, Luxair, Malaysia Airlines, Pakistan International Airlines, Qantas Airways Limited, Regional Airlines, Royal Air Maroc, SABENA, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Scandinavian Airlines System, Singapore Airlines, South African Airways, Swissair, TACA, TAP Air Portugal, TAT European Airlines, Transavia Airlines, Trinidad & Tobago BWIA International, Varig and VIASA.

COMMENTS REQUESTED ON EXPORT SALES REPORTING FOR MEATS

From U.S. Dept. of Agriculture

■ (WASHINGTON) The U.S. Department of Agriculture is requesting public comments on a proposal to begin collecting data on meat export sales. The proposal was first announced by Secretary Glickman in late July as one of a series of initiatives to improve competition in livestock markets.

Under the proposal, private firms involved in the export of U.S. meats and meat products, including poultry meats, could be required to report these sales to USDA on a weekly basis. USDA would compile and publish the aggregated data for individual

meats, meat cuts, and export destinations.

"This proposed action," Glickman said, "responds to one of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Agricultural Concentration, which investigated concentration in the livestock, poultry, and rail sectors. Among its findings was a strong endorsement of the view that widely accessible, timely, and accurate information is vital to an efficient and competitive marketplace that best serves the interests of producers, processors, and consumers."

The advisory committee reported that increased concentration within the livestock and poultry sectors has contributed to gaps and inequities in information flows to producers. Among the gaps identified was the lack of timely data on meat exports. Exports represent a growing source of demand for meat. In the mid-1980s, exports accounted for less than 2 percent of annual production of both beef and pork, and less than 4 percent of poultry production. In 1996, exports are forecast to account for 8 percent of beef production, 6 percent of pork production, and 17 percent of poultry production.

"Many livestock and poultry producers view the export information now available as failing to provide the timeliness and depth

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