

EU to end cargo-in-the-cabin flights

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By Rebecca Jeffrey



Lufthansa A330 Cabin loaded with cargo. Source: Lufthansa

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) will put a stop to cargo-in-the-cabin flights beyond July 31.

The use of the passenger cabin for cargo, known as cargo-in-the-cabin flights, have been operating since 2020, after the EASA issued approvals and exemptions for the transport of cargo in passenger cabins on a case-by-case basis.

These approvals and exemptions were time-limited and while the [EASA extended the rules in August 2021](#), it will not extend the timeframe again, it said in a statement on April 11.

The decision to allow cargo-in-the-cabin flights followed the grounding of passenger aircraft at the start of the pandemic and the subsequent high demand placed on freighter aircraft. In addition to the use of cargo-in-the-cabin flights (with seats in place and seats removed) the pandemic also saw a number of airfreight stakeholders invest in passenger to freighter aircraft conversions.

However, passenger operations – and therefore the availability of bellyhold capacity – are beginning to ramp up while the need to transport urgent pandemic related cargo such as PPE has eased.

The EASA said it “has concluded that the logistical challenges that arose in 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 crisis no longer exist to the same extent”.

In its Issue 6.0 guidelines for “Transport of cargo in passenger compartment – Exemptions under Article 71(1) of regulation (EU) 2018/1139 (The Basic Regulation), published on April 11, it further explained: “Cargo capacity in the holds of passenger aircraft is expected to increase by summer 2022, thus reducing the pressure on the logistic chain.”

The EASA said that in accordance with the guidelines it has “determined that the exemptions delivered in this context will not be extended beyond the current validity of July 31, 2022. The same applies for existing approvals that have been granted based on the use of the Deviation on transportation of cargo in passengers compartments.

“This Deviation can also not be applied to any certification projects for which the approval is issued after that date.”

The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) last year ruled that from January 2022 the [passenger cabins of China-registered aircraft would only be able to carry pandemic-related cargo](#).

However, contacts have told Air Cargo News that Chinese carriers have continued with cargo in the cabin flights past the deadline.