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Being frontliners at the centre of MCO



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Weststar staff are always reminded to look after one another, which means taking precautionary measures is a must

by HARIZAH KAMEL/ pic credit: Weststar

FOR workers in the essential service sectors, being frontliners may not mean that they are treating the Covid-19 patients directly, but it is incumbent upon them to transport patients under investigations (PUI) to safety in the middle of the Movement Control Order (MCO).

"We need to be ready at all times as we could be called up to fly anytime for medical evacuation from the oil rigs," Sarah Sufiana Saroji (*picture*), one of the first officers working for Weststar Aviation Services Sdn Bhd said.

"However, if it is related to evacuation of passengers due to Covid-19, all pilots are required to wear a personal protective equipment (PPE) suit throughout the flight to ensure the safety of our people and also to minimise the risk of contracting Covid-19," she said.

Sarah said although the suit is restricting at times, it does not deter her from observing the best practices of safety.

Working at Weststar, Sarah said they are always reminded to look after one another, which means taking precautionary measures is a must instead of throwing caution to the wind.

"I always make sure my workplace and aircraft are clean and hygienic by disinfecting the surfaces and objects inside the aircraft.

"In addition to that, I regularly and thoroughly wash my hands and make sure I have a hand sanitiser with me wherever I go," said Sarah.

As a first officer, she has to fly passengers safely to the platform and back onshore, as well as ensure safety and comfortability of her flight to all passengers.

For Nurul Izzaty Amran, an aircraft technician at Weststar's base in Miri, Sarawak, one of the challenges she and her colleagues have encountered so far is on their safety as the Miri base handles PUI cases almost on a daily basis.

"This situation is affecting the manpower for both flight and engineering crews because a crew that has been involved in a PUI case shall be quarantined at home until we acquire the test result of the passengers that we carried. The challenge is therefore in the management of ensuring sufficient crew to support the operations," she said.

She considers herself lucky as the firm has laid out proper guidance and standard operating procedure to ensure the operations run smoothly without jeopardising the safety of workers and passengers.

Essential Service Providers

As Weststar is one of the essential service providers, Nurul Izzaty said daily flight operations are still ongoing as usual.

She also personally agrees with the government's decision on the MCO as it will help break the Covid-19 chain.

"Because we are from the engineering department that is directly involved with almost everything (maintenance, etc), I'm proud to say that we too are frontliners.

"MCO has taught me that we should never take things for granted," she said.



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Real Information is Key

Times of crisis are always easier for fake news and propaganda to spread like wildfire among the mass, not just in Malaysia but globally.

Both colleagues believe that when receiving the latest Covid-19 information, it must be from verified and reliable sources such as the World Health Organisation.

Nurul Izzaty said she gets information through the Health Ministry's (MoH) official Twitter account and the company's frequent email on info and updates on the development of Covid-19.

Sarah said to be informed of Covid-19 situations, one can watch the current news on television and wait for any announcements from MoH.

"I always go on verified public health authority's social media as I believe that is the fastest and easiest way to get accurate information," she said.

She also gets daily text updates from the National Security Council on Telegram and through SMS.

As the future remains uncertain, especially for countries who are hit hardest by Covid-19, signs of hope continue to persist in those who are working on the very frontlines.

According to Sarah, they are several things that Malaysians must undertake including complying with the MCO, stay at home and practise social distancing when they are outside.

It is also important to get screened and be honest if one has any symptoms or in contact with positive Covid-19 patients.

"Don't forget to practise safety measures as guided by the MoH and lastly, stay safe and stay sane," she said.

As for Nurul Izzaty, she could not be thankful enough to the government and all the frontliners who have worked patiently and unconditionally during the MCO.

"As for Malaysians, I hope we can obey and follow the instructions given by our government and the authorities to flatten the curve of Covid-19," she added.

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