



In my opinion...

DEAN SAYS:

Crying Wolf

I am an avid customer of Delta Airlines. Over the years, I think I've flown on just about every domestic airline. I find United Airlines a bit too snooty for my taste. American Airlines left me high and not always so dry on too many occasions. TWA, America West, and Southwest Airlines just don't go enough places I go. I wouldn't fly Continental Airlines unless it was the only flight available under conditions I might consider a dire emergency. And, what can one really say about U. S. Air? Yes, what can one really say about U. S. Air!

So a Delta fan I am. The underlying reason is that Delta allows even the most lowly mileage level of frequent flyers to upgrade a full coach ticket to first class at the time the initial reservation is made. And, Royal Medallion level members can upgrade even deeply discounted tickets with coupons or even cash within three hours of flight time. I have a "first class" body that rebels against being squeezed into coach seating. So...

Flying Delta means I spend a reasonable amount of time in the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky Interna-

tional Airport. I have watched with interest as Delta has constructed its new Terminal B. When finally completed, it will be a tribute to modern air transportation.

A few weeks ago on my way to Chicago, I trekked across the underground concourse between Terminals A and B. Muttering and sputtering that the train is still not working, as I made my way along the moving sidewalk, I began to hear the distance wail of a fire alarm system alert tone. "The fire alarm system is operating," I thought. "They must be testing it."

I now reflect that my first thought was that it was being tested, rather than that there was a fire in the new terminal. I guess I've just spent too many days at the site of new construction.

As I got closer to Terminal B and the fire alarm system became more audible, I expected to see some official-looking sign warning travelers that the fire alarm installation company was testing the system, and how to report a real fire. But there was no such sign.

Up the escalator I rose, now hearing the fire alarm system clearly. I walked across the vast expanse of the terminal's center court and noticed that everyone else seemed oblivious to the wailing of the speakers. Approaching my culinary home-away-from-home, McDonald's, I ordered my two double cheeseburgers with six (yes, six) slices of cheese. The fire alarm system stopped. I breathed a sigh of relief. And then in less than a

minute the alert tone sounded, followed by a prerecorded voice announcement, followed by the slow whoop.

I asked the clerk, "Testing the fire alarm system, are they?"

"Who knows," she replied. "It's been doing that for the last two weeks."

"Two weeks?" I exclaimed.

"Yeah," she nodded. "After awhile, you don't even notice it anymore."

Whatever the reason for the situation I encountered, I could not help compare it to the many similar situations where the system testing was carried out in a professional manner. The owner and occupants of the building were alerted to the fact that the system would be tested. Signs were posted explaining what was happening. A carefully-crafted emergency plan was written and distributed to all key personnel so everyone would know how to initiate a fire alarm should a fire occur while the fire alarm system was being tested. The fire department and police department were notified in case someone called them about what was happening in the building. And perhaps more common than not, the testing was conducted during times when the building was not occupied, making certain that all normal ambient sound levels were maintained to assure accuracy of the sound pressure level readings of the audible fire alarm notification appliances.

Now I have absolutely no idea why the fire alarm system was sounding in Terminal B. I tried to find someone official to ask, and never was able to get an answer. I have written to the airport authority and to Delta Airlines, but so far have received no answer.

Often in various public education programs we've hackneyed the phrase "cry wolf" when we talk about the seriousness of unnecessary alarms. It would be a complete understatement to say that the condition at the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport was a "cry wolf" situation of enormous proportion.

I beg engineers, contractors and Authorities Having Jurisdiction alike; don't ever be responsible for such a fauxpau. Such obvious lack of professionalism is beyond disgust. □

**The Moore-Wilson
SIGNALING
REPORT**

**March/April 1994
Page 12**

Copyright © 1994 by Focus Publishing Enterprises