

GHOST

GROUND HANDLING OPERATIONS SAFETY TEAM

Just Culture

High safety standards in Ground Handling operations are critical. To reach and maintain high standards, we need to know about the things that make it less safe. We need an atmosphere of trust, where everyone can report openly, without fear of being blamed for making 'honest' mistakes. This state is widely known as a "**Just Culture**". It is something that [aviation law](#) requires us to have.

This is different to a "no-blame" culture, where people are not held accountable for willful violations and gross negligence. This can lead to an unsafe workplace, a questionable reputation and lack of employee credibility. We need to have a clear line in the sand for this.

Some unsafe actions are deliberate (e.g. criminal activity, substance abuse, reckless noncompliance, sabotage, etc.) and deserve the appropriate actions. However, most are not, so a **Just Culture** is essential to ensure we treat everyone fairly.

As an industry, we need to learn from accidents and incidents through investigation, so we can take actions to stop it happening again. Even things that may seem minor could become the next accident and/or incident if not investigated appropriately.

If staff are afraid of being punished, they won't report their mistakes or any safety concerns. If they do not report, nobody is aware, which in turn, means they will not be able to address the causal/contributing factors. If left uncorrected, accidents and/or incidents may happen again.

It is fair to say that **Just Culture** within ground operations is variable. We have seen some good examples, that have resulted in the identification of vulnerabilities, which have improved safety standards. However, we have also seen some poor examples that have resulted in punitive actions which have compromised reporting.

The new GHOST **Just Culture** posters contain the phrase "**ASK WHY, NOT WHO**". This is to remind us all that we need to consider the circumstances surrounding an incident, not just focus on the person involved.

There are many considerations and techniques that can be used. For example:

- Consider how the situation made sense to that person at that time and in that context.
- Keep asking 'why' until you have exhausted all the information about an event.
- Use substitution principles and ask if another person with the same qualifications and experience would have made the same decision.
- Check whether the same incident has previously occurred within the organisation. If so, it's more likely that organisational factors have either caused and/or contributed.

The same principles should be used when investigating non-compliances, raised during oversight activities.

If you intend to use/promote the GHOST posters, please remember, this campaign is not just about putting up a poster... it is about creating and maintaining the right culture.