

EU delays alcohol testing on ramp checks to 2021

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The EU had some changes planned for Ramp Checks and Pilot Mental Health which were due to take place on 14 Aug 2020, but these have now been delayed to 14 Feb 2021.

The three big changes

1. EASA regulations will be updated requiring **alcohol testing during ramp checks**. This will take effect across all SAFA participating countries. However, a lot of countries have already started doing this anyway: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, UK, and Singapore. In most places, local authorities have the power to carry out breathalyzer tests at any time – not as part of ramp checks. For more on SAFA ramp checks, see our article.
2. All pilots working for European airlines will have access to **mental health support programs**.
3. European airlines will perform a **psychological assessment of pilots** before the start of employment.

Despite the delay to the implementation date, it's still something worth looking at now. The UK CAA has published a Safety Alert with the following recommendations:

1. *Operators are strongly recommended to continue to introduce Flight Crew Support Programmes as required by the Regulation and to maintain existing programmes despite the deferred implementation date.*
2. Operators should also consider the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on cabin crew and other safety-sensitive personnel as well as flight crew. It remains essential that senior management of operators,

mental health professionals, trained peers and staff representatives work together to enable self-declaration, referral, advice, counselling and/or treatment, where necessary, in cases where there may be a potential safety issue resulting from a decrease in medical fitness.

3. Additionally, operators are encouraged to use this delay to develop their policies on the prevention and detection of the misuse of psychoactive substances and on the psychological assessment of flight crew.