



ULD Care Kicks The Can In YVR

(Vancouver Exclusive)—The 2013 Annual ULD CARE Conference was last week in beautiful downtown Vancouver, adjacent to the venue hosting the annual IATA Ground Handling Council meeting.

With 74 participants from airlines and other ULD-related organizations, conferees learned that tremendous progress has been made in the 8 months since the September 2012 meeting in Shanghai.

Here today is the launch of the ULD CARE website (www.ULDCARE.com), plus the first edition of the ULD CARE e-newsletter and the launch of various groups tasked with ULD initiatives. South African Airlines, Tampa Cargo, and TAP Portugal joined the group for the first time.

DECISION TIME

Building on the 2012 decision to work closely with all components of the cargo supply chain, ULD CARE has taken the initiative to collaborate with the IGHC conference with a stand in their exhibition and a presentation on the opening morning, leading—it's hoped—to closer integration of ULD CARE and the ground handling community.

High on the agenda was an in-depth discussion on how the standard IATA 10-digit ULD identification code system (e.g. AKE12345AC) in use on maybe 700,000 ULDs worldwide might be adapted to cope with the proliferation of different configurations and new sub-groups of ULD that are found in the industry today and can be expected in future.

The current format doesn't lend itself to reflect present requirements such as lightweight units, fire suppression equipment, or temperature controlled ULDs. It goes without saying that any changes would trigger IT system modifications everyone wants to avoid.

The IATA CBPP has recognized the need to add a heretofore missing format for ULD Rate Class Type in the next edition of Cargo-IMP. Another option is making a change to the ULD Regulations by allowing the use of position 4 as a code to designate a new category.

MAJOR REDESIGN

Another key accomplishment of ULD CARE has been to carry out a major redesign of the current ULD Control Receipt, which on one hand is widely used to control the handoff of ULD between parties but on the other hand is still based on '60 SITA message format.

The new user-friendly format will be presented to the IATA ULD Technical Panel for consideration as a replacement for the old format, opening the door for electronic messaging of ULD transfers between two or more parties.

ULD PEOPLE AND CHANGING FOCUS



Citing heavy responsibilities at his carrier, UPS, Dick O'Mara announced that he's stepping down as president of ULD CARE; former vice president Urs Wiesendanger (left) was elected president.

Going through the list of forward-looking goals, Urs mentioned adding ten more airlines to the membership, as well as five more non-airline members.

Continued development of the current system and smart phone apps will add value and facilitate tracking ULD transfers.

Jettainer's Irene Gräf, (right) Head of ULD Control Desk Europe/Asia, presented "Trends in ULD Management – supporting ULD Care and industry goals" focusing on main challenges including localization, availability, and damage prevention. Irene said, "With 89 percent of ULDs being handled by ground handlers and an average 50-60 percent of the total cost of ownership ascribed to ULD damage, development of not only lightweight but damage resistant materials is critical."



With professional dedicated ULD management services coming of age, making better use of data and digitization stands to deliver on the promise of dynamic ULD networks.



Workmanlike detail continued with an ISO TC20 SC9 (the air cargo sub-committee of ISO TC20, Aerospace) liaison report that constitutes the technical reference for Civil Aviation regulations (TSO) and a number of standards and revisions dealing with straps and containers.

Perennial topics such as a single method to test pallet nets, and environmental and degradation testing continue to be on the agenda.

Furthermore, consideration will be given to more precisely defining non-certified ULD strength requirements, which was brought up at WCS.

Bob Rogers (left) of Nordisk gave the regulatory update and highlighted the foreseen impact on the industry, with authorities moving rapidly towards life limits on any non-metallic items.

Bob concluded by saying that “a TSO is not an operating instruction to use that item; it is an endorsement by an aviation authority that the TSO-approved item meets a certain minimum performance standard.”

M2M

M2M (machine-to-machine communications) has taken the world by storm and the potential for using this proven technology in ULDs is both tantalizing and self-evident.

Telemetry-equipped units can be visualized and locations shown on a map or satellite image.

It's also possible to create geo-fences around some areas so that when a ULD isn't supposed to be moved outside a warehouse, a fence is drawn around the warehouse on the map, and an e-mail is sent if it's moved outside that geo-fence.

ULDs with integrated telemetry are the key to improving the active cold chain by reducing risks and increasing availability.

End-users will have immediate access to quality data and peace of mind regarding product condition throughout transit. Partners within the active cold chain network will also have real-time condition alerts on units to facilitate proactive response procedures, maintenance awareness, and improved return procedures. What are we waiting for?

In his presentation to the IGHC meeting next door, newly elected president ULD CARE Urs Wiesendanger elaborated on the functions and benefits of the ULD demurrage system database and then took on the main issue between airlines and ground handlers when it comes to ULDs. In his words, “airlines are responsible and accountable to aviation authorities to use only airworthy ULD on all flights and for the costs associated with maintaining ULD in airworthy condition. While ground handlers are responsible to airlines for providing ground handling facilities for ULD, handlers have only limited responsibility for the care of ULDs, and also equally limited financial exposure.”

Ted Braun