

Research

*Also pilots are under pressure
- how a profession lost its glamour*

Shut up or you're fired

The pilot as the one who pays the most for his seat on board of an aircraft – the competition between airlines is cause for miserable working terms and conditions. And it reduces flight safety.

by Sophie Kluivers & Saskia Naafs in DE GROENE AMSTERDAMMER (22/09/2016), translated by ECA

John was ecstatic when he finally got in at Ryanair. He had sent out dozens of application letters and had been on the search for a job for more than 1.5 years. With over a hundred thousand Euros in debt for his flight training, he was worried whether or not he would ever find a job. Thus the telephone call from Ryanair came as a relief.

The selection procedure was easy: a 15 minutes interview with two pilots and a 15 minutes simulator check ride. He was hired right away. But when he saw his contract John was shocked. Together with two other pilots - who he didn't know and never would know - he was supposed to set up a company in Ireland. That happened through an employment agency which would pay them on a monthly basis.

John worked long days, 12 to 14 hours was no exception. He had to get up early and fly up to 6 flights a day. Still he was only paid for actual flying hours. This meant that for breaks, delays, cancellations, flight preparation, administration and standby, and even when he was ill he was not paid. In reply Ryanair says that pilots are paid by the hour, but that the €145 hourly wage includes 'time on ground'.

John had to pay a lot as a self-employed person. Before he could even start at Ryanair, he already paid 40.000 Euros. It started with a fee for the selection procedure, after that the bill for the accountant to set up his company. When all of this was taken care of, an 8 week type rating course followed. John also needed to pay for his uniform, the airport badges, and his expensive loss of license insurance. And it didn't stop there: he and his colleagues also paid for their own food and drinks. They only receive hot water during working time, the tea bag they have to bring themselves. On board cockpit and cabin crew have to pay the same price as the passengers for meals and beverages.

When John had to fly from a different airport, something that occurred regularly, he had to plan his own trip and hotel. Often there were last-minute changes to his roster and his sign-in base. 'Basically you had to oblige to everything the company thought of.' He was only entitled to 10 extra OFF days per year, but requests were denied time and time again. During the winter he had a mandatory month of unpaid leave, but the summers were very heavy. 'During that period you were right up to the maximum of the legal flight time limitations. This exhausted a lot of pilots. Because of the stress and the fatigue it was often not safe to fly.'

The old days where you started your career on a fixed pilot contract, a good salary and excellent secondary conditions when leaving flight school are over. The profession has lost plenty of its glamour over recent years. In numerous interviews Ryanair's CEO called pilots 'overpaid taxi drivers' and stated that Ryanair is so cheap because they pay their pilots almost nothing. Increasing competition in aviation has led to growth in the number of destinations and lower ticket prices, but also led to a struggle to reduce staff cost.

You can save a lot on the 'expensive' pilots, according to research from Ghent University in 2015. One in six European pilots no longer works in permanent employment, but through temporary contracts, a temporary employment agency or a self-employed construction. Especially young pilots find themselves in an awkward position: they have high debts and few flight hours when they finish their flight training. They are more eligible to a job at a low cost carrier and have to accept often deplorable working conditions, the researchers said. What used to be a dream job, is now hard work under precarious contracts.



Leonardo DiCaprio in *Catch Me If You Can*, 2002 (DREAMWORKS)

This is not only detrimental to the pilots, it also endangers flight safety. The Ghent study and our conversations with pilots, reveal that the high workload, long days, the financial uncertainty and lack of oversight and accountability of employers by setting up complicated bogus self-employment structures lead to unsafe situations. Pilots no longer dare to call in sick, out of fear of losing their jobs and they fly when they are actually too tired to do so.

A relaxed job with a big salary, flying all over the world and enjoying plenty of leisure time: that's the image many people have of pilots. This is history: in the nineties KLM pilots flew to Australia, remained there for three weeks and then had a week off at home. KLM used to have its own hotel for their staff in Bangkok. Pilots flying to the An-

tilles got so much pocket money that they could afford a complete diving course. But that image has rapidly changed. Although the most experienced KLM captains still make €250.000 annually, young pilots starting their career with a LCC generally earn less than €30.000 a year, perform several flights on one day and usually just sleep in their own bed.

To analyze how the profession of pilots has changed so dramatically, we must look back at the early nineties when, as so many other sectors, aviation was liberalized. Previously, each European country had its own national carrier and countries had mutual agreements on landing rights. Very clear, but there was little room for growth, especially for countries with small home markets such as the Netherlands. Therefore our government and KLM could hardly wait to

jump on the liberalization train. Fewer rules and an open European market would lead to growth, competition, better services and cheaper airfares. Good for consumers and good for the economy.

Nevertheless in 1990, the SER (i.e. the Dutch social-economical council) warned that governments needed to retain the opportunity to intervene against the 'harmful effects' of liberalization on companies and employees. A SER-committee on transport issues suggested to setup EU agreements on working conditions and employment. This committee foresaw that liberalization would turn the aviation industry upside down, with old companies that would topple and new ones who would take their place. They also predicted an international labour market for aviation personnel, which would seem elusive for national rules. This well-intentioned

About the research
For this study we approached dozens of pilots. Many of them did not dare to cooperate out of fear of losing their jobs or getting into trouble, even if we only asked about their experiences with former employers. Some airlines either explicitly or implicitly prohibit their staff to talk to the media. More often the pilots themselves do not want to take this risk. The pilots who were willing to tell their story did so on the condition that they would remain anonymous. Their names are therefore fictive. The real names are known by the editor.

State aid

The considerable growth of the Middle Eastern airlines, the so-called ME3, is according to Otjan de Bruijn of the Dutch Airline Pilots Association (VNV) due to unfair competition. In these countries airlines, oil companies and the civil aviation authorities are led by the same people. 'The Emirates National Oil Company manages all of the Emirati oil fields. Emirates and Qatar actually fly with free kerosene. KLM example spends around 4.2 billion Euros on fuel; a tremendous difference in the balance sheet. If you fly for free, you can show fantastic earnings.'

Moreover, the ME3 would benefit from unfair state support because they pay no taxes in their home country, are free of environmental restrictions and high social contributions on labour, do not have to deal with unions and above all: are subsidized by their oil states. A claim which is by the way difficult to prove.

To be clear state aid is not completely prohibited in Europe. Member States may still rescue their national carriers from bankruptcy with a loan. For example, in 2014 Polish LOT airlines received an emergency state loan worth a hundred million Euros, in 2005 Alitalia even received 1.2 billion euros to put the company back on its feet. However this kind of emergency loans need to be repaid.

The European Commission is less happy with indirect subsidies given to low-cost airlines in the form of deals with regional airports. These gladly pay to make sure the Ryanairs and Wizz Airs of this world would also serve the most remote corners of Europe and give the local economy a boost. The Association of European Airlines calculated that, back in 2011, Ryanair received 793 million Euros by means of indirect subsidies. Without these subsidies the 503 million annual profit would have turned into a loss. To prevent these kind of excesses, in 2014 the EU sharpened the rules with regards to state aid to regional airports and airlines.

advice remained (purposely) unheard. The liberalization of the aviation industry became a pure economic exercise, targeted solely on growth and profits.

In 1993, European airspace was opened and fixed ticket prices disappeared. Four years later, airlines were no longer tied to a home base and they were allowed to carry passengers between any two points. Around the same time low cost carriers stormed onto the battlefield with great fanfare. By significantly reducing their costs and services, they were able to offer much cheaper tickets. British easyJet and the Irish Ryanair were the first to set foot on Dutch soil. In 1996 easyJet advertised a single journey between London and Schiphol for 99 Dutch guilders (approx. €50) and started a frontal attack on KLM with a bold advertising campaign. On the bright orange poster easyJet gave a hefty tap on the head of a KLM-swan. The title above said it all: 'The hunting season is open.'

Thanks to those cheap tickets air travel exploded. The increased demand for pilots caused training organisations to throw their doors wide open to train as much pilots as possible. Far too many, it would turn out. Offer and demand used to be well-balanced. The Dutch National Aviation School (RLS) was founded shortly after the Second World War with the aim to deliver 'highly qualified pilots'. In periods of reduced demand the RLS simply trained less pilots. But in 1991 this state company was privatized and taken over by KLM for the symbolic sum of one guilder. The RLS carried on as an independent business unit, named KLM Flight Academy (KLM-FA). Not long after this more and more flight schools popped up. At the peak, there were more than twenty.

These commercial training organisations could not afford to train fewer students or close the doors if fewer pilots were needed. Anyone who paid was welcome, even in times of economic recession. Hence after 2008 a large surplus of pilots emerged. The demand for pilots would pick up again, the schools promised. After all, there were enough orders for aircraft manufacturers Airbus and Boeing and the passenger numbers showed a steady increase. That was true, but the promised job growth failed to materialize. Although the airline industry averages around three percent growth per year, in 2015 research firm Steer Davies Gleave calculated the number of jobs actually declined between 2000 and 2013. This hurts in particular young people up to thirty years, for them there are the fewest jobs. Inexperienced graduate pilots therefore accept deteriorating wages and conditions.

Due to the surplus of pilots airlines are picky. 'Combined with increasing competi-

tion and the need for cost-saving this delivers the classic recipe for exploitation,' says Ronald Dekker, labour economist at the University of Tilburg. After the increasing precariousness of the less skilled professions, now higher education occupations will also witness job insecurity and deteriorating working conditions.

Dekker: 'You see it also in other sectors, such as mental health and media where there is a surplus of psychologists and journalists. Employers react normally the same: if you want to leave, there are ten others waiting. Pilots have the disadvantage that they need to go through an expensive training, therefore have high debts and should continue to fly in order to maintain their certification. So you get situations where pilots work as self-employed, or even pay to work.' To young people who are now considering to become a pilot, Dekker would say: 'Think again carefully. There is a high probability that you end up in a precarious, flexible dark corner.'

**No more bank loans
Flight schools are commercial organisations aimed at making profit. Students can therefore not turn to DUO for a scholarship or a student loan. Therefore aspiring pilots needed to turn to the bank. On special 'pilot desks', they could obtain a hefty loan averaging €150.000. Except for the training costs, a large part of the students also used this as a financial buffer to live on during the course. Recently Rabobank and ING closed all of their 'pilot desks' and as from 1 September this year ABN AMRO, the last bank in financing of pilot training also ended this service. The loans were provided on the basis of the high income that future pilots would obtain, but the economic crisis destroyed those future prospects. Over the last years it has happened repeatedly that pilots could not repay the bank.**

The disappearance of the pilot's loans is a obstacle for the flight schools. Without new financing flight training will only be reserved for young people from wealthy families. The KLM Flight Academy website advertises that the faculty - in cooperation with KLM - is consulting with various financial parties to provide alternative financing.



John Wayne in *The High and the Mighty*, 1954 (WARNER BROS.)

This allowed him to start flying on a commercial jet, but at a cost: €58.000 for thousand flight hours.

The debts pilots make in order to get trained are significant. €150.000 or more is no exception (see 'loans'). A graduate wants to pay off that huge debt with rising interest rates as soon as possible and therefore seizes every job opportunity. Take for example Paul, he graduated in 2011. A bad time for pilots, there were few jobs. 'I was naive, I thought that when I finished my training companies couldn't wait to hire me.' The reality was different. After many unsuccessful applications, he registered with an employment agency for a type rating that linked him to the German budget airline Germania. This allowed him to start flying on a commercial jet, but at a huge cost: €58.000 for 1000 flight hours.

Such a *pay-to-fly* (P2F) construction is highly controversial. The European Cockpit Association (ECA) warned that safety is compromised because it is a perverse incentive for the pilot to fly at any cost, even if he or she is sick or tired. According to ECA companies benefit of these paying employees to further reduce their costs. So it may be that it is the pilot who is the one on-board which has paid the most money for his seat.

For Paul this meant €58.000 of debt on top of the €100.000 debt he already had. Because he started his flight training in later life and already had a family to support, he chose to start at Germania. Otherwise he he would never obtain a job as a pilot. 'I saw it as my only chance to get into the cockpit.'

Some pilots we spoke had already started a new study or a job and wondered if

they could ever bring their expensive training into practice. For instance Martin, who graduated in 2009 at KLM's flight training academy. Per month he paid six hundred Euros in interest alone on his student loan of €130.000. At KLM he was on a waiting list, called 'a buffer list' since being on the list doesn't give the graduated pilots any guarantee to a job. Ever since Martin is on the list job opportunities hardly improved. According pilots union VNV there are currently 900 unemployed pilots in the Netherlands. Half of them are struggling paying off their loan. Around 200 pilots are in debt mediation with their respective banks.

Martin worked for a while as a taxi driver and at the headquarters of a bank. Meanwhile he sent letters of application. Most of the airlines never replied. 'My life stopped. I did not have the proper papers for a job and I didn't earn enough to pay off my loan. Moreover, I wasn't working in the profession of which I had been dreaming for years, and was trained for,' he says. Finally Lufthansa invited him, but again he was put on a waiting list. Five years later, they called to ask if he was still interested. By then Germany was no longer an option, as he was able to start working for KLM four years after graduating. Still he is one of the lucky ones. 'I know enough guys who are financially broke.'

After his pay-to-fly adventure, Paul too found paid work. With five hundred hours of additional flying experience and €45.000 additional debt he could start with a Belgian air carrier. He is now employed on temporary contracts. His salary is paid by a British

agency. 'These are just tax tricks, so I have a higher net salary.' Would he not rather have a permanent job? 'Look, everyone prefers to work for KLM, everything there is well organized. But those jobs are not for the taking.'

The pilots with a permanent job are the lucky ones. But they too are under pressure. EasyJet pilots went on strike for a better collective labour agreement with less tiring work schedules, more influence on the duty roster, more sick pay and better retirement. The pilots of Air France have been on strike this summer against cuts, as are the Swedish pilots of SAS Scandinavian Airlines. Companies like SAS and Air France-KLM offer passengers traditionally good service and their staff excellent working conditions. But in order to remain competitive, these companies feel forced to save on personnel costs.

In a small meeting room of a low, non-descript office building in Badhoevedorp VNV board member and KLM pilot Otjan de Bruijn explains the situation. The outlook is far from positive. Carriers like KLM are threatened from two sides. 'Within Europe by the low cost companies, and outside Europe by the major carriers in the Middle East: Etihad Airways, Qatar Airways and Emirates. 'The LCCs carry more than forty percent of the passengers in Europe. Before the liberalization this was only one and a half percent.

But particularly striking is the rise of the three major companies from the Middle East, called ME3. In the last seven years Emirates of the United Arab Emirates has become the airline which transports the most passengers worldwide. Qatar and Etihad follow closely. This threesome seems unstoppable. Currently, these three companies have more than six hundred wide-body passenger aircraft on order. Wide-body airplanes have two aisles and can accommodate hundreds of passengers. Compare that to an order for two hundred of these aircraft for all European airlines combined.

The middle-eastern companies may be swimming in money (see box 'aid'), they also do everything possible to reduce costs. Rob knows. He experienced the golden years at KLM, but had to retire at the age of 56. He wanted to continue working and started at the fast-growing Emirates within a month. The biggest difference with KLM is the enormous workload combined with short rest periods, he says. 'We usually stay no longer than 24 hours at destination before we fly back to Dubai. We are dealing with time difference and regularly skip a night. That is very heavy.' After an intercontinental flight Rob and his colleagues are off for one

or two days before the next flight duty. For the first time in his long flying career he is faced with strong fatigue and experiences sometimes falling asleep in the cockpit.

The workload for pilots in the past thirty years increased significantly: from four to five hundred hours per year to the double nowadays. Under European regulations, pilots may fly up to one thousand hours in a calendar year and should not work more than sixteen hours a day, including the time 'on ground'. Many airlines remain barely below that number. In the United Arab Emirates too there is a limit of nine hundred hours per year. But Emirates uses different definitions for rest and working hours than European companies. Rob gives an example: 'A compulsory briefing for flight is not counted as working time. So we can make more hours 'in the air'. When we risk exceeding the maximum flight duty time the company has to provide an additional pilot and that is more expensive for Emirates. In case of delays it is expected that we fly, even though we are at the maximum duty period.'

Emirates doesn't consider rest time as working hours. A flight from Dubai to New York returns immediately. This is possible because there are two pilots flying along in the rest area of the aircraft who then fly back. This way Emirates does not have to pay a hotel and avoids having the airplane on the ground unnecessary. Back in Dubai, the pilots have been on-board the airplane for almost thirty hours.

Obviously this raises questions about safety. Safety experts estimate, that fatigue is a (contributing) factor in at least fifteen to twenty percent of the plane crashes. Last spring the Russian news channel Russia Today revealed that Emirates air crew experienced high work pressure and severe fatigue, leading to inattention and errors in the cockpit. Socialist Party MP Eric Smailling asked parliamentary some questions on this subject. After all, the Emirates flights with tired pilots also land at Schiphol. Do we have to be worried? No, said Secretary Sharon Dijksma. 'It is the responsibility of the competent authorities of the United Arab Emirates itself to keep oversight on possible health and safety issues of the flight crews.'

According to Rob that is precisely the point here. 'We are not checked on our work and rest times.' Furthermore pilots have no place to go with their concerns about high workload and fatigue. There is no union which represents the interests of Emirates pilots. Complaints can be filed at the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority, headed by Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, also CEO of Emirates and budget airline Flydubai.



Jacqueline Bisset en Dean Martin in Airport, 1970 (UNIVERSAL PICTURES)

'In case of delays it is expected that we fly, even though we are at the maximum duty period.'

Also pilots who are sick and still fly, jeopardize safety. This is confirmed by former Ryanair pilot Peter when he talks about the one time he sat next to a captain with an ear infection who nevertheless went flying. The commander already had been invited to the Dublin headquarters in order to explain why he had reported sick and he chose not to experience that again. He thought he could fly, but due to the changes in cabin pressure the ear wax sprayed all over the place. A dangerous situation, Peter explains, because 'if he couldn't have solved his medical issue, I would have been on my own in the cockpit.' Additionally, your ears can suffer permanent damage.

When asked how Ryanair treats sick or overtired pilots, a spokesman tells us that there is always a replacement crew available. There is a large stock of standby pilots, 'so that the customer experiences minimal impact caused by illness or unforeseen events.'

At Emirates Rob experiences how pilots are under pressure to fly. Those who call-in sick must report directly to the head office. 'According to Emirates, only the company doctor can determine whether someone is really sick, a statement of your own doctor is not sufficient. So even with 42C degrees fever, you still need to show up at the office the same day. If the company says that you are not sick enough, then you just have to work.'

By the way, it doesn't stop there. Staff must also write reports about each other. 'You can report on anything about your colleagues, up to the fact that a cup of coffee was put down in the wrong way.' Flight attendants and pilots, everyone can betray everyone. It will be even rewarded. If you have submitted five reports, you qualify for a promotion. 'The company can dismiss without mercy or refuse a promotion if you often report ill, when there are too many reports that have been filed about you, or if you make mistakes,' says Rob. 'Emirates loves to designate scapegoats. We are supposed to work hard with minimal rest. If subsequently you are not well rested and make a mistake, then it's your own fault.' Because of the heavy workload and the culture of fear the workforce turnover at Emirates is enormous. 'There is even a waiting list of people who want to leave the company.'

Twenty years of liberalization has delivered the consumer many benefits - more destinations, lower ticket prices - but in the meantime the airlines and thus also the pilots are under great pressure. The national companies who seemed too big to fail are overtaken on all sides by their competitors. While easyJet, Ryanair, Etihad and Emirates book record profits, numerous smaller companies like Sabena in Belgium, the Hungarian Malev and Estonian in Estonia disappeared. Earlier this year the Estonian

airline received a final blow when the European Commission decided it had to refund 85 million euros of unlawful state aid.

Even KLM struggles. The company fiddles with staff about the smallest cuts and only succeeds marginally to reduce costs. Between the strikes KLM emphasizes its importance for Schiphol as national airline and calls upon the government to guard their preferred position and limit the landing rights from highly competitive carriers at Schiphol. But while KLM has long seen the disadvantages of liberalization, the government still believes firmly in 'fair competition'. Late last year State Secretary Dijksma expanded Emirates landing rights at Schiphol, angering pilots union VNV, which accuses the Dutch government 'to even the path for companies from wealthy oil nations.'

Meanwhile Brussels says, through the voice of new European Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc, to be 'brave enough to allow competition'. She now tries to create a level playing field by friendly asking other regions to play by European rules and to take over our good working conditions and environmental standards. It seems a tad naive.

By definition airlines are international companies that do not let national regulations hinder them. They can easily shift their staff and reduce their profits, thus costs to circumvent labour rights. LCCs shop for the lowest tax rates and lowest social contributions. The Norwegian prize fighter Norwegian is a prime example. Norwegian uses an international subsidiary company registered in Ireland to hire pilots through an agency in Singapore and stations their crew in Thailand. Already in 2014 the company became a reason for concern in Europe, but nothing happened. Norwegian now also wants to enter the North American market. However the US pilots union is determined to stop this 'unfair competition' whatever it takes.

Ireland's Ryanair, led by the unscrupulous accountant Michael O'Leary, uses a known way to the labour costs pressures. An estimated seventy percent of Ryanair pilots are self-employed. Ryanair says in a comment that 'a majority of the captains' are on permanent contract. What the situation is for novice pilots like John, the company does not disclose. In all communications Ryanair emphasized that John was not employed by the company, but by the Brookfield Aviation agency. 'This way Ryanair tries to stay out of the limelight,' says John. But Ryanair is not alone: according to the Ghent study on temporary contracts, companies like Niki, Norwegian, Wizz Air, easyJet and Transavia work through employment agencies and self-employed constructions.

According to the British and Irish legislation the Ryanair construction is legal, but not every country accepts this. In early July German tax inspectors raided four sites of Ryanair in Germany. Agents knocked at pilot's homes unannounced and seized computer hard disks. The German tax authority is investigating the employment relationship between the airline and its employees for a while now. The public Ministry suspects Brookfield Aviation to be a mailbox company for Ryanair. This way the Irish airline would evade income tax and social contributions for their German staff. The Ryanair pilots based in Germany are suspected of tax fraud and risk a fine or even imprisonment.

It seems hard to eliminate bogus self-employment and pay-to-fly. At European level, no agreements exist, each country has its own social legislation. However national governments are not completely powerless. As in Germany other countries took action against the circumvention of labour law. France closed Ryanair's base in Marseille in 2011, because it felt that Ryanair staff had to work under French employment. Last

Dead tired That fatigue can have serious consequences was revealed in March this year when a flydubai plane crashed: 55 passengers and 7 crew members died. There are strong indications that the pilot was fatigued. After circling over Rostov airport for 2 hours due to a storm over the airfield, he passed the maximum flight duty time hours. Fatigue proved to be a known issue in this budget airline based on more than four hundred leaked flydubai safety reports. In forty of these reports pilots complained about fatigue and excessive workload.

Unfortunately fatigue is not a problem that is limited to the Middle East. Various studies in the period 2010-2012 found that as many as eighty percent of the European pilots sometimes experiences fatigue in the cockpit. This varies from 'heavy eyelids' to so-called micro-sleeps and falling asleep behind the controls. But pilots are reluctant to post-report fatigue or opt out before commencing their duties. They feel pressured by their employer or are afraid to be 'invited for tea, no biscuits'.

year Ryanair had a dispute with the Danish unions. They claimed that Ryanair staff earned less than half of what the staff at their competitors received. The Danish media published some juicy stories about Ryanair employees. One of them told how he collected returnable bottles after the flight to spice its thin salary. The Danish unions forced a compulsory collective agreements for the hundred Ryanair staff in Denmark through a court issue. Ryanair closed the base in Copenhagen, displaced all staff and moved to a new base in Lithuania.

Labour economist Ronald Dekker thinks it is very difficult to impose national or EU legislation on those internationally operating airlines. 'As an EU Member State tackles an airline, they say: I'll establish a subsidiary in Ireland. If the EU acts jointly, they can move to a country outside of the EU. These are multinational companies which can move easily, it is in their genes.'

In that respect the SER did have a point with its opinion in 1990 for European agreements on social conditions in the airline and regulations on the working conditions, says Dekker. 'But the EU is simply an economic partnership. There are strict rules on market organisation, but no social policies. The social impact of open markets are still hardly recognized. The adverse effects are left for the member states to solve.'

But many member states are reluctant to crack down on businesses, out of fear of job losses, a worse competitive position or other negative effects on the economy. If authorities do not intervene, who will? Dekker: 'Companies will not change by themselves as long as there exists a competitive advantage and profit margins are under pressure. With regards to the consumer, we shouldn't expect any change. Why would he bother about a few exploited pilots? All the consumer wants is to fly as cheaply as possible. Eventually things will run their course, but then there will be a price to pay when some planes fall from the sky. When those accidents show a correlation with the working conditions then there will be a correction, otherwise not. But let's hope it will not come this far and businesses take their own safety seriously.'