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Asthma Society of Canada®

NATIONAL ASTHMA PATIENT ALLIANCE

NAPA position statement regarding the Canadian Transportation Agency's decision to accommodate air travellers with nut allergies

In response to the Canadian Transportation Agency's (CTA) recent decision on accommodating air travellers with nut allergies on Air Canada flights, the National Asthma Patient Alliance (NAPA) of the Asthma Society of Canada (ASC) today released the following position statement:

“We welcome the CTA's ruling on January 2, 2010, that serving peanut- or tree-nut based snacks on flights can affect the mobility of people with life-threatening allergies to nuts. The CTA's decision that Air Canada create buffer zones for people with nut allergies will help reduce the constant anxiety of an anaphylactic attack these people live with and allow them to travel in greater security.

In ruling this way, the CTA has recognized that life-threatening nut allergies are a disability and that the needs of people with severe allergies must be accommodated. The measures it proposes—the buffer zone at the back of the aircraft, the general announcement within the zone and the amount of advance notification Air Canada needs to comply with the accommodation—will not create a 100 percent allergen-free environment, since the airline has no control over the foodstuffs other passengers bring on board or carry on them as residue. Nonetheless, these measures coupled with the ventilation and filtration systems in modern aircraft and the recommendation that all cabin personnel be trained to use Epi-pens, will go a long way to providing a secure environment for travellers with allergies.

In view of their new policies to allow pets in the passenger cabin, we hope that Air Canada and WestJet will extend the spirit of this ruling to people with allergies to domestic animals. The NAPA Executive Committee extends an invitation to both airlines to work with it to create policies that will allow these people to travel in equal safety as those who have allergies to nuts. To make this a reality, we recommend that these policies include similar buffer zones and appropriate advance notification. We hope an open, cooperative discussion will resolve the concern of our members and provide an acceptable solution for the airlines.”

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