“Europa Airlines, In-flight Quality Problems”

Europa Airlines are an international airline with Headquarters at London Heathrow Airport, flying into 110 airports around the world. They operate short and long haul flights, operating a range of 777, 747, 737 and Airbus aircraft. Some of the aircraft are over five years old and 45 have had major internal refit of aircraft seating and in-flight catering equipment, including ovens for cooking a variety of hot foods for passengers, cabin crew and flight crew. This case study will concentrate on a quality problem with the ovens.

A contract was awarded, after tendering and an e-auction. The successful bidder was Ozland Flight Equipment (OFE), who are situated in Perth, Australia. At the prequalification stage, OFE demonstrated that they had quality accreditation and supplied Qantas, Air New Zealand and South African Airways with complete in-flight catering equipment. References were taken up and very positive feedback was received.

It is nine months since the last of the 45 aircraft were refitted. The first aircraft was refitted 14 months ago. There have been a series of incidents over the past six weeks. This has affected 14 aircraft and, in all instances, the ovens have failed in flight. This equipment is not safety critical and would not lead to the mandatory grounding of an aircraft. There has been a flood of complaints into the Catering Department of Europa Airlines, and to the Chief Executive Officer. Specifically, aircrew have threatened a strike, first class and business class passengers are irate and other passengers have registered complaints. The airline has issued vouchers to a value of £85,000 to passengers as a goodwill gesture.

You are the buyer now responsible for resolving the quality issue with OFE. Your Quality Manager has produced a report in which it is alleged that the oven wiring system is faulty, causing cut outs. He has attributed the problem to the actual wiring, which is stamped “OKRC KOREA”. The ovens were supplied and installed by OFE. Europa Airlines have no spare ovens and have removed 10 of the ovens and rewired them at a cost of £3,000 each, including wiring and labour. You have contacted OFE by e-mail and their response is not encouraging.

*“Thank you for drawing this matter to our attention. We confirm that at the time of installation and acceptance the wiring was in working condition. If Europa Airlines rewire our ovens, you will invalidate the product warranty. If you return the alleged faulty ovens to our Perth factory, we will conduct, at your cost, a full quality inspection. After the inspection, we will forward our report. At this stage, we do not wish to predict the outcome. We can make available, on a conference call, our Manufacturing Manager, obviously by arrangement.”*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Task

1. It is vital that this matter is resolved at the earliest opportunity and you should prepare an ideal action plan to fully resolve the quality problem.
2. Your plan should include consideration of the fact that your aircraft are continually in various parts of the world.
3. What elements would you take into account?
4. What would be your ideal solution?