

# Video Clip: Joe Leader on how zero-cost APEX Health Safety standard will build passenger confidence in airlines

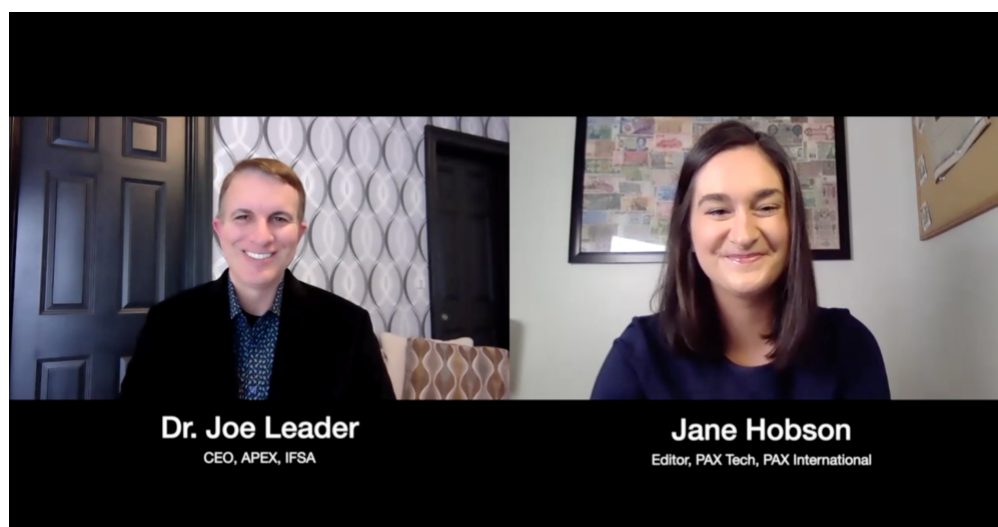
Dr. Joe Leader, CEO, APEX IFSA (left) speaks with *PAX International* and *PAX Tech* Editor Jane Hobson about the APEX Health Safety standard for airlines

Dr. Joe Leader, Chief Executive Officer at the Airline Passenger Experience Association ([APEX](#)) and International Flight Services Association ([IFSA](#)), says the [APEX Health Safety](#) standard powered by [SimpliFlying](#) announced January 12 aims to send a unified message to travelers.

“What’s really important is we have not yet had global standards put forward,” Leader said in an interview Wednesday with *PAX International*. “That’s what we did over the past several months, and in launching with our first dozen airlines, it really provides a great beginning platform for the safer return of travel over the course of 2021.”

The Health Safety has been in development since September 2020. The customer-centric COVID-19 certification audit is accessible online at no cost for airlines globally. The goal is to increase customer awareness of aligned industry health safety standards, encourage more informed air travel choices, and for airlines to reach a two-percent higher rate of return than non-certified airlines.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Singapore-based airline consulting firm SimpliFlying independently created a 70-point list of COVID-19 health measures. APEX Health Safety powered by SimpliFlying covers the most relevant of these 58 touchpoints across the passenger journey, divided into 10 categories based on the importance to the passenger. The audit spans categories that include testing, tracing, on-the-ground procedures, inflight measures, and co-branded partnerships that increase product safety integrity. It requires a full submission verification, validation and quarterly review certification process.



Dr. Joe Leader, CEO, APEX IFSA (left) says the APEX Health Safety standard is the first global standard of its kind for airlines, which will provide a platform for the safe return to travel in the year ahead. A still from the January 13 interview with *PAX International* and *PAX Tech* Editor Jane Hobson

The audit begins [online](#) and then advances to full verification of customer health safety standards. Audited airlines need to submit detailed proof of each measure it claims to be undertaking, which can include pictures, videos and evidence logs. This evidence is verified by the global SimpliFlying team which then awards the airline a finalized FlyQ score at the end of the audit, based on the latest quarterly FlyQ values focused on customer health safety. Airlines scoring at least 200 FlyQ points attain the Gold Standard – a high bar for health safety. Airlines with 300 FlyQ points and above are awarded the Platinum status – for going above and beyond in their health safety measures. Airlines that attain more than 400 FlyQ points are awarded the Diamond status – providing hospital-grade health safety for passengers.

“SimpliFlying really focused on customer wellbeing and to us that really resonated with our values,” says Leader.

With many airlines currently in the audit process, APEX has unveiled the first 12 certified airlines. They are: [Air Canada](#), [Alaska Airlines](#), [Etihad Airways](#), [JetSmart](#), [Qatar Airways](#), [SAUDIA](#), [Singapore Airlines](#), [Spirit Airlines](#), [SriLankan Airlines](#), [Turkish Airlines](#), [United Airlines](#) and [Virgin Atlantic](#).



Airlines scoring at least 200 FlyQ points attain the Gold Standard; 300 FlyQ points and above are awarded the Platinum status; and, airlines that attain more than 400 FlyQ points are awarded the Diamond status

### **Participating airlines see promise in obtaining APEX Health Safety certification**

*PAX International* reached out to the certified airlines for comment. Here’s what was received ahead of publication:

#### **Qatar Airways Group - Diamond Certification**

“As commercial aviation continues to deal with the challenges and impact of the global pandemic, we welcome the introduction of this and other relevant COVID-related hygiene and safety reviews, and would encourage other airlines to continue to build passenger confidence and assist with the recovery of the industry by participating wherever possible.” - **Akbar Al Baker, Group Chief Executive**

#### **Etihad Aviation Group - Diamond Certification**

“In these uncertain times, an accredited health and safety standard is valuable for passengers who can choose a Diamond-rated airline such as Etihad with absolute peace of mind. Passengers who may feel fearful of flying can feel safe in the knowledge that Etihad’s response to the pandemic has been rated at the highest standard of the industry. The certification was awarded thanks to Etihad’s comprehensive approach to wellbeing on board.

We will be communicating this important achievement to our valued Etihad Guest Members through our social media channels and to the media as we look to reassure travelers of the safety of flying with Etihad.” - **Terry Daly, Executive Director Guest Experience, Brand and Marketing**

### **SAUDIA - Diamond Certification**

“With APEX’s 42-years serving as a global non-profit dedicated entirely to advancing airline passenger experience, SAUDIA’s commitment to customer care has never shined as brightly as proven now by SimpliFlying’s exhaustive, scientifically-based review.” - **Captain Ibrahim S. Koshy, Chief Executive Officer**

### **Virgin Atlantic - Diamond Certification**

“Virgin Atlantic has an unwavering commitment to creating a safe and healthy environment for our customers and people, so I’m delighted we’ve been awarded Diamond Status by APEX Health Safety powered by SimpliFlying, for our efforts in ensuring the highest standards of cleanliness and sanitization. Making sure everyone flies safe and well is a non-negotiable, and has been an absolute priority for us since the start of the COVID-19 crisis. Our commitment is underpinned by robust cleaning measures both in the air and on the ground, our innovative customer experience, the introduction of COVID-19 insurance and robust testing initiatives for our people and customers. It’s testament to our teams that APEX has recognized these efforts to its highest standard.” - **Shai Weiss, Chief Executive Officer**

### **US\$1 billion for suppliers as part of CARES Act work by APEX and IFSA**

Earlier this year, IFSA and APEX worked together to achieve US\$3 billion in funding the initial Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act for related industries. In its latest iteration, the relief program designates \$1 billion of additional facilities for suppliers.

“That’s an area of tremendous pride for both APEX and IFSA. This is an area where the International Flight Services Association really excels,” Leader says, speaking of the additional funding for suppliers. “We’re tremendously proud because it was our specific efforts in Washington, from our incredible team members, actually on the IFSA side, working with the Senate and House that was able to work that in. We’re grateful for all of our members’ support as well and reaching out to their [U.S.] Congressional and Senate representatives.”