

Air NZ flight safety video an online hit

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File photo of US fitness guru Richard Simmons, who has featured in an Air New Zealand in-flight safety video, which has gone viral on the Internet, attracting a million hits in three days.

An Air New Zealand in-flight safety video featuring camp US fitness guru Richard Simmons has gone viral on the Internet, the airline said Wednesday, attracting a million hits in three days.

Air New Zealand said the video "mile-high madness", which has a sequin- and lycra-clad Simmons taking passengers through pre-flight safety routines on a plane decked out like a disco, had been hailed as the best safety video ever.

The airline's marketing manager Mike Tod described the online response to the video as "quite extraordinary".

"In a matter of hours the new safety video had become a global hit on YouTube," Tod said.

The three-minute video, which includes a cameo appearance from Air New Zealand chief executive Rob Fyfe in a sweatband and shorts, began screening on Air New Zealand flights this week.

The airline has previously had safety videos featuring cabin staff wearing nothing but body paint, and New Zealand's famous All Blacks rugby union team.

A scene from the latter, showing New Zealand centre Richard Kahui refusing to kiss a male flight attendant, was cut after complaints it could spur gay suicides.

Air New Zealand has also stirred controversy with advertisements featuring a furry puppet called Rico who makes double entendres as he extols the airlines virtues, with some staff labelling it a "sleazeball".

The airline bemused many New Zealanders with an advertisement released this month which had the puppet starring alongside US rapper Snoop Dogg, reciting lyrics such as "from Cali to Kiwi -- we do it big in the New Zee".

The Simmons video can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iaTEgoezNQ

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