

# THE PROFESSIONAL FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR

# MENTOR

NOVEMBER 2008



VOLUME 10 NUMBER 11

- 10 Reasons Students Fail Checkrides
- Dangerous Herbs
- Understanding your Flight-Training Insurance Issues



JIM KOEPNICK

# position Report

## Good Neighbors?

Educating local leaders averts myths about training safety

Around the country, local know-it-alls are claiming that flight-training operations are safety concerns at their airports. They say that those “inexperienced new pilots” are a greater risk of causing accidents and incidents than the more experienced pilots who have already received their certifications or ratings. In a few cases, airport managers have even proposed banning flight training at their airport to allay this perceived risk—besides, training doesn’t provide any real value to their community, right?

Wrong. The perception that flight training is riskier than other kinds of operations isn’t based on facts or real experience. In fact, flight-training operations have a safer record than the general aviation community as a whole, and pilots who do not maintain proficiency and currency by training regularly are at greater risk for an accident or incident than those who do.

That’s because training is about safety. It’s something that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and insurance companies have embraced; training and continuing education is the best method for

preventing mishaps. As a result, the vast majority of flight training that occurs throughout the country is aimed at preventing the very accidents these folks are worried about.

That’s what we instructors do. We improve the skills and advance the capabilities of the pilots with whom we fly, whether they’re pursuing new certificates through advanced training, learning to fly new aircraft types, meeting insurance safety requirements, or striving to maintain their proficiency as pilots. We provide flight reviews to ensure they meet the standards set by the FAA, and we serve as role models to demonstrate safe flight operations at our local airports. I’d call all of that “value.”

From within the industry, we can see this. Yet, individuals and organizations from the “outside,” who haven’t been educated about what training really involves, may not understand the benefits that good flight-training operations at their airports really provide. They won’t know about the safety seminars you sponsor that provide local pilots the opportunity to enhance

their skills and to learn about potential risks that they can avoid through proper preparation and flight management. They may not understand that having a flight-training provider at their airports actually makes their local area more—not less—safe.

And they don’t know that, in many cases, those schools can even make areas more prosperous. Flight-training operations bring people into the community; these individuals have often traveled significant distances to receive their training, and they wouldn’t have visited the community if this service wasn’t available. They frequent local gas stations, restaurants, and other businesses. The entire community benefits from these patrons, not just the airport and the flight school.

As we train our students, it is imperative that we teach safe operations. But it’s also important that we educate the communities where we operate about what we really provide. Flight instruction is not unsafe; it is quite the opposite, and flight instruction enhances safety at airports and within the local pilot community.



Jason Blair, MCFI  
Executive Director

**The perception that flight training is riskier than other kinds of operations isn’t based on facts or real experience.**

Take the time to talk with local officials and community leaders to help them learn what benefits flight instruction brings to the airport and the community as a whole. If we fail to convey this message, we will have done a disservice to ourselves and aviation as a whole. When a specific section of aviation is targeted, it affects the entire community. Keep aviation alive by educating your local airport users, community, and local leaders about the benefits flight instruction providers bring to their airport and the community in which the airport exists.

In a time where flight-training businesses face rising costs of operation and have customers who are facing increasing economic pressures of their own, we don’t need another shoe to drop. For that reason, reaching out is a step in the right direction. ■