

General Aviation Security

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Flight Training Edition



Teaching Students Aviation Safety & Security

One Level —Part 2 by Joe Corrao, J.D., M.A.

Airline Training: It's not a job, it's a lifestyle. by Aleca King

A Bail-what? by Wendy Pardew, Esq.

Interview with Aviation Illustrator Steve Karp

*Focusing on security and safety
issues within general aviation.*



Chet Kuhn inverted in his Stearman.

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Front cover photo: A Cessna 172 prepares to land with full flaps.

Back cover photo : A Piper Warrior II takes off.

Photo credits: Dave Hook

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General Aviation Safety and Security Training

By GA Security's Distinguished Contributors and Guests



One of the most challenging things to do as a flight instructor is teaching safety. Sure, in many terrestrial situations students are well prepared. But we were not born with wings. Flying safety is, for most student pilots, an entirely new discipline.

Who teaches us to balance skill with perception and wisdom when encountering our first overshooting turn to final? Who teaches us of the perils of porpoising on landing? Who teaches us that the hairs on the back of our necks should be standing up as VFR pilots when the ceiling is dropping and the visibility is closing in all around us? This sixth sense for safety comes to us thanks to our flight instructors. But how to teach that in a few short hours leading up to our first solo, our first cross-country solo, and ultimately to our practical test and beyond, that's the real challenge!

I don't think there's any practical way to regulate how aviation safety is taught. Frankly, if someone tried to regulate safety training, I wouldn't even want to try to read that regulation. It would be like trying to regulate common sense.

Security, on the other hand, is a relative new comer to flight training. Security can be regulated. The challenge will remain for regulators to keep security regulations effective without being unreasonably burdensome.

*Flight instructors in the United States are responsible for teaching students the special emphasis items in the FAA's Practical Test Standards. One of these special interest items is **aviation security**. Lacking a reference to create a standard of performance, teaching security is a challenge. But that's for another article within these pages.*

—Pub.

The U.S.A. Perspective

Jason Blair, CFII, DPE



Tribal knowledge might be the best way to describe how pilots (and students) in the United States have aviation safety and security presented to them. Sure, the regulations that govern how we fly and teach flying here are founded on safety concerns developed from lessons and tragedies of our collective past, but a formalized approach to systematically teaching safety and security is not as codified as our regulations. That, however, doesn't mean it isn't taught

In aviation training, safety concerns are almost impossible to avoid. They are addressed in vignettes in textbooks, in every flying magazine that one can find, and the topic of hours of hangar talk at every airport. While an instructor doesn't have a set syllabus that they teach to cover every safety concern possible, the resources that we as an industry give them and that they share with their students covers the subject well. In this sense, aviation safety is taught more as an amalgamation of tribal (community) knowledge that is shared with every individual throughout and beyond their pilot training.

This does take some effort on the part of the instructors. As they teach students, the burden of finding and introducing relevant resources to their students falls on their shoulders. These resources are, however, readily available. A free subscription to AOPA's *Flight Training* magazine is a good start for a student and any number of other publications may support the efforts. Online resources are plentiful and, in most cases, free. Finding case studies that have been described (or even viewing them on your own at the NTSB's database - <http://www.nts.gov/aviationquery/>) can offer insight into past accidents from which we learn. Specific training courses offered by aviation associations or commercial training providers targeted at highlighting specifically-identified safety concerns round out some great places an instructor can send students.

"Online resources are plentiful and, in most cases, free."

Aviation security is a little bit different. I might describe aviation security in the United States at the general aviation level as using tribal knowledge and a collaboration between a neighborhood watch program and government involvement. While specific training is not required to obtain a pilot's certificate, it is again something that is hard to avoid. At airports without air carrier service, security procedures may be less restrictive and less obvious than at those that operate commercially operated aircraft.

At local airports, the community watch approach is common. AOPA's Airport Watch

program (<http://www.aopa.org/Advocacy/Security-and-Borders/Airport-Watch-Security/Security>) is the most visible national program that pilots are typically aware of and represents a collection of best practices and recommendations that have been developed in a partnership between AOPA and the TSA. But when it comes down to it, instructors, again, are not necessarily required to introduce this information to pilots since it is not a part of tested material for pilot certification. The community knowledge is how most pilots are introduced to security concerns at most general aviation airports in the United States.

This is certainly different at airports that have air carrier service, where more strict security procedures are likely to be present. In many cases, these airports require badging and escort of any persons who do not have a badge on ramps or in secured areas. For most student pilots, the introduction to these procedures is when they begin flying and focused solely on the specific procedures for access at the airport at which they will be doing most of their training.

When it comes to the broader question of security—and specifically of access to becoming a pilot by individuals who may pose security concerns—the process is a little less visible, but is robust. Flight instructors are required per TSA regulation to take an annual security awareness training if they are actively engaged in providing any instruction at all. This training not only highlights things that the TSA believes the instructors should be aware of, but also makes instructors aware of procedures they must follow if providing training to any non-U.S. citizens.

The screening process for non-U.S. citizens seeking flight training in the United States requires a TSA background check (at a minimum for resident aliens and the proper visas for non-resident aliens) to be completed prior to any provision of any training. Screening of candidates doesn't stop here though.



Photo: Dave Hook

Short field technique and obstacle clearance calculations should be well rehearsed before needed.



Made it!

According to TSA resources, through coordination between federal agencies (FAA, TSA, FBI, etc.) the national pilot database is systematically and continuously checked against any known threats that may exist. Once a pilot has any pilot certificate (including student pilot certificates) they are validated in a normal process that happens behind the scenes with which few instructors or students ever have any interaction. Should a threat arise, either at initial screening or later in that pilot's career, it will be addressed by one of these agencies. Yes, this means that even U.S. citizens are screened against the lists these agencies maintain. While this may sound a little like big brother intruding into your pilot records, I would note that the list of certificated pilots is a public list (unless someone has gone to the effort to request that they not be listed) and that if you find yourself on one of these lists of concern, you probably already know why and becoming a pilot may be the least of your concerns. If it is determined that someone should not be allowed to have a pilot license, the TSA (or other governmental agency) will be the one that notifies the individual.

The approach to training for security and safety concerns in the United States is one that counts on a multiple resources to convey information. While an abundance of resources are available to instructors, it doesn't ensure that all concerns will always be addressed during the training of any one pilot. The expansive availability of free or subscription-based sources of information (print or digital) offers pilots an opportunity to conduct significant self-learning as they train and throughout their pilot career. And it's hard to discount the value of those hangar chat sessions on an overcast Saturday when nobody is flying, but one of the "old dogs" of the airport is recounting stories and lessons learned.

No single method is used by every flight instructor, but the combination of methods builds a tribal knowledge approach to conveying safety and security training to pilots in the United States. The freedom of information and the openness of our pilot community make this possible.

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