

FLIGHT TRAINING IS A MUST

BY: DAVE FITZPATRICK

In my line of work—selling aviation insurance—I constantly deal with the questions of safety and accident prevention. Everyone wishes for lower priced insurance, but the only way to achieve that is by reducing the number of accidents and therefore the number of claims. So this month I'd like to discuss a few issues that touch on improving our skills as pilots and reducing the number and size of aviation claims.

As most of you already know, Transport Canada's new requirements mean that all licensed pilots in Canada must take recurrent training in order to keep their licenses valid.

I have no doubt that one major contributing factor in this decision was the fact that most pilots seem to feel that regular training is not necessary. Our recent survey of B.C. aircraft owners showed that 58% of respondents had not taken any training at all in the previous four years. (*NOTE: A full report on the results of the 1996 B.C. Aviation Survey will appear in next month's issue of The Aviation Trader.*) This in turn has led to increasing aviation accident rates over the past decade.

Let's face it: no pilot can learn everything there is to know about flying in the basic ground school course. We all need to keep learning and improving our skills, and there is no better way than continuously updating and expanding our training.

It's sad that Transport Canada had to introduce mandatory requirements, but if it helps increase training then it's a good thing. It is also revealing that in our survey, 63% of respondents said they would take additional training if it would earn them a discount on their aviation insurance. This is something I plan to take to the insurers to see if they would be interested.

Aside from more formal training, there are lots of things you can do to improve your skills and safety.

You can learn a lot just by reading the aviation periodicals and studying the issues and problems they discuss. For example, one recent safety article I read discussed the recurring problem of accidents due to fuel miscalculations. The article recommended better fuel training as well as going over fuel calculations and getting to know the aircraft you are flying.

This issue of knowing the aircraft you are flying is

very important and often overlooked by people who rent or borrow their plane. Let me give you an example that came my way recently that shows just how easily disasters can happen.

John, who owns a Cessna 172, thought there would be no great difference or difficulty in flying the PA-28 he borrowed from a friend. Initially everything went smoothly. After an uneventful takeoff and climb, John banked the plane for his 200-mile cross-country flight. It was about halfway into the trip that the engine started to cut out. If he didn't know better, he'd swear that he was running out of fuel!

"It couldn't be...," John thought to himself. He went over the fuel calculations one more time and concluded again that there was enough fuel on board to complete his trip.

As John searched desperately for an explanation, the aircraft began to descend. He recalled that there was something different about the Piper's fuel system... something about a selector switch. As the plane continued its descent, he searched frantically for the switch. Finally, glancing to his left he found it: a quick turn and the engine came back to life.

Although this tale has a happy ending, there is an important moral to the story (one John won't soon forget!): Never fly an aircraft that you are not familiar with. Learn everything you can about the make and model you are going to fly.

So please, take learning, improving, and training seriously. If we all do it we will not only reduce accident rates and insurance premiums, we will save lives. Let's all make sure we don't become statistics.



DAVE FITZPATRICK IS AN AIRCRAFT OWNER, PILOT AND THE PRESIDENT OF AIR 1 INSURANCE. HE OFFERS FREE AVIATION INSURANCE REVIEWS TO THOSE THAT CALL HIM AT 1-888-917-1177.