AASF Position Report Fall 2008

Alaskan Aviation Safety Foundation

Thoughts from the front office

Inside this issue:

A good part of our work is trying to pinpoint aviation safety concerns and provide resources so pilots and other people concerned about aviation safety can fly safer. Some recent events have given me cause for pause.

Low Flying

There have been several accidents this fall where low level flying was contributory to the accident. Flying low can be fun. Seeing the ground zip by and watching wildlife is great. However, flying low does not leave any room for error. This is aside from the fact that low flying is not in accordance with FAA regulations. If you experience some type of problem, even as simple as carburetor icing when flying at low level, there are not a lot of options. The distraction to trouble shoot the problem, apply the correction, and fly away are all negatively affected by flying at low altitude. Think before you do it.

Many years ago I was working in Anaktuvuk Pass when a friend landed in her C-172. The aircraft was completely covered with squashed bugs. I inquired how her low level flight up the river had been, and she was totally surprised that I knew what she was doing. This was a pilot that liked to take risks, and she is not longer with us. She perished a few years later in another accident.

Emergency Procedures

There was a horrific accident recently just off of the departure end of a Merrill Field runway, where a pilot was faced with that most terrible dilemma: how to handle a power loss at low altitude on takeoff over an urban area. Our machines are so reliable that most of us seldom think about how we would handle this problem. However, much has been written about this specific problem. I strongly suggest some research for these articles and read them. (Try Avweb and AOPA Safety Foundation.) Most of the authors say that under ideal conditions, you might be able to turn back to a runway from some target altitude (depending on the aircraft and loading). However, most authors also say conditions are seldom ideal. The general advice is not to try a 180 back to the airport unless you are at an altitude that works for your aircraft. Most say to land straight ahead. Some authors believe as I do that you can improve your chances by looking around and making some turn, left or right to the best area available, even if you cannot make the full 180 turn.

Carbon Monoxide

I just finished the annual on my aircraft. The shop found some small cracks forming on my heat muffs. I contend that many of us end up flying with small low level doses of CO and never know it. It takes many hours for a low level dose to cause obvious problems, however even this low level dose can cause a degradation of human performance that can be measured.

Likewise, a high dose of CO can quickly degrade performance and the pilot may not even know it. Ellen Paneok experienced such an event, and barely landed back in Barrow. She probably suffered lasting physiological problems from this event.

If you flew this summer, and sometimes got a headache, or got sleepy when flying, get your muffs checked now. Do not wait for an annual. I also advocate carrying a good, low level CO detector. Search Avweb for an article on CO. This article says that if you use the chemical dot detectors, you may be seriously in trouble before the dot changes color. The author advocates that pilots should carry an electronic detector that can sense low levels of CO. This same author found that some aircraft may pick up a load of CO at taxi speeds, but not at flying speeds. Certainly good food for thought.

New pilots may not remember, but in 1985 the State Epidemiologist set up a sampling program to sample the blood of pilots at a refueling station at Merrill Field. This program found 7 of 56 aircraft where the blood carboxyhemoglobin levels exceeded 2.5% COHb, a surprisingly large number of pilots and passengers with low level CO in their blood. See the article at http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b1985_06.htm.

I have always wondered if some of the unexplained accidents where pilots fly perfectly good airplanes straight into a mountain might be caused by CO, either total incapacitation or just fuzzy thinking. The bottom line is do not skimp on heat muff inspection during your annual, and seriously consider carrying some type of electronic detection that can help detect changes to your exhaust system between annual inspections.

Winter

Snow is coming down the Chugach Mountains near Anchorage. Fairbanks has had several days of measurable snow. The eastern Alaska Range is deep into winter. So get you plane ready for winter now. Consider changing the oil to flush away the harmful acids that formed when flying this summer. This is also a good time to install desiccant plugs if you will not be flying this winter. If you install wing and cowl covers, make sure they are tied down tightly. Hint, put your N number on your covers so in the event that they do get loose, someone return the covers to you.

Consider your battery. I now take mine home and keep it stored safety in my garage where it will not freeze. This comes from experience after freezing a couple of batteries. After a battery runs down and freezes, I can attest that it will not work well and will let you down. It is a simple FAA approved owner activity to disconnect and pull your battery. If you do not know how, ask your mechanic or another experienced aircraft owner. We are blessed to have so much aircraft knowledge available in Alaska.

The AASF will be active at Aviation North Expo in Fairbanks October 16-18. This event will have many top notch speakers and forums. If you can attend, please consider. This is not a free event, admission is charged to cover expenses, but in my opinion it is well worth the cost. For more information, please go to www.aviationnorth.org.

Fly safe.

Carl Siebe, Chairman of the Board

Fall Safety Seminar

AM Session, 1 WINGS Credit	
8:00-8:30	Registration
8:30-8:45	Welcome
8:45-9:15	**FAAST team Statistics and Updates** *David Karalunas*
9:15-10:00	**Survival Essentials** *Eagle Enterprises, Inc.*
10:00-10:10	**Anchorage / Palmer Corridor** *Mark Madden, UAA Proffesor*
10:10-10:20	**Break**
10:20-11:30	**Winter Maintenance Panel Q&A** ▪*John Alsworth, Alaskan Aircraft Engines* ▪*Lou Nagy, UAA Maintenance Professor* ▪*FAA Flight Standards Representative* ▪*Rod Russell, AMD*
11:30-1:00	**Lunch**
PM Session, 1 WINGS Credit	
13:00-14:00	**Winter Survival Considerations** *Skip Widtfeldt*
14:15-14:45	**Reading Winter Weather** *Flight Service Representative*
14:45-15:00	**Break**
15:00-16:00	**Ski Flying / Flying Experiences in Wrangell St. Elias by** *Paul Claus*
16:00-16:15	Closing and door prizes

November 1, 2008

UAA Aviation Technology Division,
Merrill Field, Anchorage, AK

Sponsored by:

AASF

FAAST FAA SAFETY TEAM

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Door Prizes!

Donated by: Alaska Aviation Heritage Museum, Ace Fuels, Northern Lights Avionics, Eagle Enterprises, Inc.

Would you like more information on this years Fall Safety Seminar? Call the Alaskan Aviation Safety Foundation at **243-7237** or email them at **aasf@alaska.net** You may also look them up online at www.aasfonline.com This seminar allows you to earn credits for the WINGS program. Pre-register online at **www.faasafety.gov**

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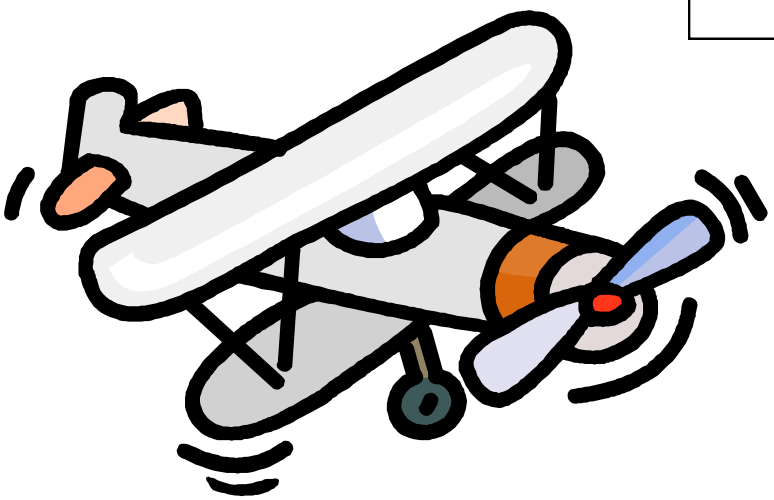

Upcoming Events

- **Oktoberfest**. Alaska Airmen Annual Membership Social, October 11, 2008.
- **Aviation Swap Meet** sponsored by the UAA Aviation Maintenance Club, 10am - 4pm, UAA Aviation Complex, Merrill Field. October 11, 2008.
- **Aviation North Expo** - www.aviationnorth.org, Fairbanks. October 16-18, 2008.
- **Ellen Paneok Estate Sale**, at the Anchorage Millennium Hotel, 7-10pm, October 24, 2008
- **AASF Fall Safety Seminar**, November 1, 2008