



Alaska Aviation Safety Foundation



1st Qtr 2015

Newsletter

Chairman's Corner

Doing It Right 2015

We have just concluded what may be the safest flying year in Alaska history. That certainly is true for Fatal and Serious Injury (FSI) accidents. The goal had been to get that number below 16. The highest actual number since 2000 had been in 2001 with 24. In 2013 that number was 21, but in FY 2014 it was 8. That is a very reassuring number. Maybe we are all starting to do something right.

But we do not want to get complacent and we do want and can drive that number to zero.

This month's newsletter reinforces the messages we delivered at our fall safety seminar on November 15. The bottom line is inadvertent flight from VFR into IMC happens all too often in Alaska and it will kill you and your passengers. You may have gotten away with in the past, but do it often enough and you will become a FSI statistic.

Looking back on the year from the standpoint of AASF, it has been a good one. You have continued to support us and we appreciate it. As an all volunteer Board of Directors we have very very little overhead, yet have been able to conduct a safety seminar in fall and spring; publish a quarterly newsletter; in conjunction with Alaska Public Media record two Hangar Fling segments a year; and present three sizable scholarship checks to up and coming aviation professionals.

We also have staffed a booth at many different aviation venues throughout the year including the Great Alaska Aviation Gathering.

But we can do more.....**with your help**. We would like to take our seminars outside Anchorage.

And we would like to encourage world class aviation speakers to come to Alaska and share their ideas. Professor Dale Wilson from Central Washington University and Dr. Bill Rhodes from Aerworthy, LLC presented at our fall seminar thanks to Alaska Airlines, Copperwhale Inn, and Inlet Towers.

To do these things we need you to renew your 2015 membership. You can also contribute through Pick Click and Give and the Combined Federal Campaign.

Thanks and **Fly Safe.**

Harry



VFR into IMC

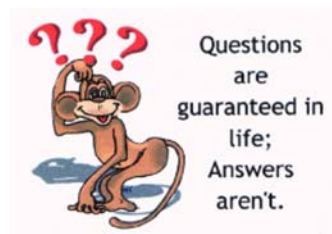
Attempts to continue VFR flight into worsening weather and IMC conditions accounted for a higher fatality rate than other weather related accidents, according to the 22nd Joseph T. Nall Report, for 2010. There are four categories of weather related accidents listed in the report; day VMC, night VMC, day IMC and night IMC. Of these categories, day IMC accounted for the highest number, 21 accidents, comprising 48.8%, of weather related accidents. This was the highest of any category. The night IMC category had 9 accidents, and accounted for 20.9% of weather related accidents. The other weather related causes of accidents are 'poor IFR technique', thunderstorms, and icing, and constituted a much smaller percentage of accidents, 2 to 3%. The one hundred-eighty-degree turn is one of the hardest things to do in flying. Turning around, in the face of worsening weather, is something that not enough pilots do, regularly. The accident rate speaks to this.



This begs the obvious question, why? Why do pilots still attempt to continue VFR flight (day or night) into IMC conditions? There are no easy answers for this. Contributing to this, it seems that too many pilots still lack a basic understanding of weather. Do they know how to properly read and interpret aviation weather reports and forecasts? How many will take the time to call a briefer (Lockheed-Martin) for a professional weather briefing, and ask pertinent questions? How many will heed the advice of the briefer when told, VFR flight not recommended, but go anyway?



Thus, this is still a root cause of many weather related accidents. Is this part of the flawed mindset that says, 'we can make it', in spite of the obvious signs not to depart? Is it a sense of invulnerability? How often is it a case of trying to 'beat' the weather; or beat the front? How often does 'get-there-itis' influence the decision to go, instead of staying, and waiting for conditions to improve, regardless of the resulting inconveniences to those affected? These are among the many questions asked. There are no definitive answers.

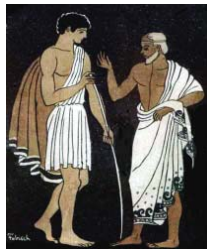


Some pilots are not able to 'connect the dots'. Even after being told that VFR flight is not recommended (VNR), they depart, overly confident in their piloting skills, and confident that they will find a way around or through the weather. Typically, they have done this before and been successful. This shows a complete lack of respect for Mother Nature and weather. Weather always wins. Luck will eventually run out. The irony in these kinds of accidents is that they are preventable. But some pilots foolishly decide to press on.

Typically, lower time pilots (less than 500 hours) are involved in many of these accidents. They are over-confident in their abilities and do not fully appreciate the risks inherent in flying into adverse weather. Again, 'get-there-itis' is a contributing factor in many of these. Pilots are more concerned with the consequences (social or business) of not getting somewhere when they need to be there. This is where they need an alternate plan.



This is a situation where a pilot could benefit greatly from having a 'mentor pilot', that is, a more experienced (seasoned) pilot, and one whose judgment the pilot respects, to discuss the situation with. This is someone with whom to discuss the current and forecast weather situation, and whatever other concerns a pilot might have that are wrongly influencing his decision to go, instead of staying put. He or she can counsel the pilot and put things into the proper perspective. It's all about managing the risks involved. Hopefully this would influence a pilot into staying put, or waiting for better conditions, instead of taking off into worsening conditions. Admittedly, while this sounds good, how many pilots do this? Not nearly enough.



Fly safely!

John

Mat Su CTAF Areas now on Anchorage/Fairbanks Terminal Area Chart

The Common Traffic Area Frequency (CTAF) Areas that became effective on May 29, 2014 are now shown on the Anchorage/Fairbanks Terminal Area Chart, published on November 14th. Located on the panels with the IFR Traffic Flow (on the Fairbanks side of the chart), the inset shows the boundaries of the recently assigned CTAF areas and high traffic locations associated with them. When not in contact with ATC, pilots are encouraged to use these frequencies to increase situational awareness in these areas.

Pilots should use CTAF frequencies specifically to communicate aircraft location and intentions to other aircraft or to a Flight Service Station. Other air-to-air communications should be conducted on 122.75 or a company frequency to avoid congestion.

Additional information and more detailed maps may be found at www.faa.gov/go/flyalaska/

The following information was taken from a Colleen Mondor, Alaska Dispatch news article on the AASF Fall Safety Seminar

Alaska Trooper Helicopter Crash

One of the clear points made at the National Transportation Safety Board public meeting on the Alaska State Troopers helicopter accident last year near Talkeetna is how quickly inadvertent flight under visual flight rules into instrument meteorological conditions -- or VFR into IMC -- can result in a crash. The loss of Helo-1 on March 30, 2013, which resulted in the deaths of the pilot and two passengers, followed a flight of only seven minutes. Thanks to onboard image-recording equipment, investigators were able to track every movement of the helicopter and illustrate how difficult such flight can be without proper equipment and training.

The pilot of a Eurocopter AS350 held an instrument rating, but was noncurrent. His last logged instrument flight was in 2001. His last logged hour of instrument flight in a helicopter was in 1986 and he had recorded 38 total hours of instrument rotorcraft time. Overall, he had 10,700 flight hours, with 8,500 in rotorcraft.

The Department of Public Safety did not require nor provide flight training for inadvertent VFR into IMC and Helo-1 was not instrument-equipped nor was it certified for instrument flight.

The forecast weather in the area on the night of the crash included a ceiling of 350-950 feet; heavy snow and low visibility was recorded. After an hour spent on the ground assisting a stranded snowmachiner, who was suffering from hypothermia, The pilot and an Alaska state trooper prepared to depart. Once in the air, according to NTSB investigator, the helicopter was flown in a manner that suggests a quick encounter with instrument meteorological conditions.

The image-recording device showed that a rapid climb was initiated five minutes into the flight. The climb was not necessary to clear any obstacles and was consistent with pilot actions after encountering inadvertent IMC.

About 40 seconds later, the attitude indicator was caged, meaning the pilot manually adjusted the instrument to show straight and level flight even though Helo-1 was actively engaged in high pitch-and-roll angles. This readjustment resulted, according to investigators, in the instrument providing "erroneous but difficult-to-ignore attitude information."

They added that the helicopter's flight path at this time was "consistent with spatial disorientation and loss of control." Helo-1 crashed two and a half minutes later.

VFR into IMC is not uncommon in Alaska and its prevalence prompted the Alaskan Aviation Safety Foundation to schedule a safety seminar on the topic in Anchorage on Nov. 15, 2014. NTSB Alaska Region Chief Clint Johnson provided an overview of the Helo-1 accident at the seminar, which also includes two visiting experts on the subject of decision making and inadvertent flight into IMC.

"In Alaska, the weather can change quickly and sometimes unpredictably," said Harry Kieling, chairman of the Safety Foundation Board. "Pilots should make decisions to stay in visual meteorological conditions, period. However, sometimes conditions deteriorate. Everyone needs to know basic instrument survival skills and this can be done by practicing basic instruments with a safety pilot or qualified instrument instructor.

"Do everything possible to stay VFR," Kieling concluded, "but if you momentarily enter IMC be able to quickly and safely fly out of it. "

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association's Air Safety Institute has developed an online course, Weather Wise: VFR into IFR. It describes weather conditions to avoid, and decision-making strategies to avoid them. While not Alaska-specific, the 30-minute course combines video interviews with pilots who survived these situations, along with interactive graphics and access to more detailed reference materials. It is free, and iPad compatible.



First Quarter Events 2015

February 14—Alaska Aviation Safety Foundation Board of Directors Meeting. OAS Conference Room.



April 24—Alaska Aviation Safety Foundation Spring Float Safety Seminar. OAS Hangar



May 1-3—Alaska Airman Association Great Alaska Gathering
FEDEX Hangar



The foundation has only
one
mission:
TO PROMOTE AVIATION SAFETY
THROUGH
PUBLIC EDUCATION AND RESEARCH