

Good morning, and thank you, Peg [*Gilligan*]. I must say that in just a few short months as the administrator, I've seen quite a bit. Accidents ... hearings ... calls to action ... hearings ... GAO audits ... hearings ... IG audits ... hearings. It's a long day when you start hoping for a softball ... like reauthorization.

From what I've seen so far, it seems that something has to happen to get us going. In an industry this mature, that shouldn't be the case. We have to do a better job of issuing a Call to Action *before* we need to.

This assessment may seem harsh, because there are many, many operations out there that as a rule are working above and beyond the safety standard. For them, the margin of safety is never too great. They push, and they do whatever it takes to raise the bar.

I'm speaking to those who don't take this approach. Let's face it, the national and international trends for fatal accidents and accidents overall are no longer pointing downward. In fact, they may be up slightly.

We're seeing the same culprits: standard causes like unstable approaches, overruns, checklists not read properly, unsterile cockpits. If we're being candid with ourselves, we'll admit *that list* is longer than it should be.

In June, I made a "call to action" to look at airline safety and pilot training. This call was to encourage the U.S. industry to gather together and share their best practices across the board ... so we could implement the things that we know would make a difference and that are common sense things to do.

The biggest factor I think for all of aviation is the need to step up the professionalism in the workplace. Whether you have a wrench in your hand ... whether you sit at a yoke ... or carry a clipboard, wear a headset or work in the galley ... I'm not seeing consistent professionalism. It's definitely there in the vast majority of the aviation workforce, but it's not uniform throughout the industry. The juxtaposition of the tapes from Captain Sully and those from Colgan are proof positive. One is textbook greatness, the other a complete inattention to basic details. All the flight crews and the controllers in this room know that *sterile cockpit* can and should mean one thing and one thing only. And the high level of professionalism is the thread that keeps us safe.

Over the years, we've seen a decided shift in the makeup of the workforce. There was a time where senior captains were the guys with the gray hair. Now, we're seeing senior captains with less than three years of experience.

Experience is a wonderful teacher, and there is no substitute for learning at the hands of someone who's already been there and done that. I've joked a dozen times since joining the agency that as a young pilot, two things I never wanted to do were to meet my chief pilot or the FAA administrator. As funny as that is, it's a naïve assertion. The inexperienced people in the system *need* to meet the ones who've been around the block. They need to seek them out and mine whatever golden nuggets they've got.

You know, I remember my first solo takeoff, and I *really* remember my first solo landing. But what I remember most about that time was the guidance from my instructor. He would talk me through each step as many times as I wanted. To me, it was the most difficult challenge I'd ever face ... those early takeoffs and landings. And while the instructor knew that he'd be dealing with more sophisticated students, that didn't stop him from going through the checklist one more time ... and one more time after that.

And now that I have 14 thousand hours in my log book, and I've instructed five dozen pilots myself, I know why he did it.

In a word: *professionalism*. You take as much time as is necessary to make sure that someone learns the right way, until the fundamentals become a reflex.

You *can't* be assured that people are properly trained unless you've taken the time to reinforce those fundamentals again and again. If you don't, you can't really be sure they'll know what to do when they're supposed to. That's why inexperienced pilots run through checklists while the plane is rolling. Their heads are down, and it doesn't matter how sophisticated the warning system might be. On the other hand, properly trained people do the right *thing* the right *way* at the right *time*.

When you're in a hurry, you make bad decisions or take shortcuts. And shortcuts always have a price.

When you skip on the fundamentals, you have the accident in Lexington, where the compass, the signage, the NOTAM and a big white X on a runway aren't enough of a deterrent. You're tired, you're not thinking the way you should, and full power without enough runway is in your immediate future.

The call to action I made in June, could also be looked at as a call to action regarding professionalism. I wanted the airlines and their chief pilots to spread the word on best practices. I think that of all the things we do, all the steps we take, that taking the time to share *wisdom* is what's going to give us the biggest payoff. There are many, many pilots flying very successfully in the system. They avoid mistakes because they *always* look at the big picture while they're looking at the small screen.

That's situational awareness, and in this case, you should read situational awareness and professionalism to mean one and the same thing.

By extension, you can stretch this same principle across time zones and national boundaries. Safety is not the sole property of those who are safe. Instead, safety is the thing everyone must export all the time.

That's one of the main reasons I think we need to see more mentoring across the board. I also think that we need to see greater use of the tools at hand ... like safety management systems ... across the board. When you have as few accidents as we do, it's difficult to spot a trend with a slope that has only three data points on it. SMS is the answer there.

When people know that they can raise their hand and say, “Hey, I think there’s a problem here,” it’s *then* and *only then* that we’re going to make the big leaps forward in safety. If you have a situation where someone raises a hand and then is punished for doing so, all you’ve done is encourage silence. When you make silence the rule, when sweeping issues under the rug becomes the status quo, you have a recipe for disaster.

In times of economic duress, it’s especially crucial that people speak up. No one sets out thinking, “If I skip *this* step, I’m going to cause an accident.” Instead, it’s more like, “Our staffing is down, and I’ll get to that step later.” When you have an entire workforce skipping a step here and another step there, bad things will happen. And when they do, no one should be surprised.

If you’re hearing my observations as an indictment of pilots, technicians, inspectors, controllers, mechanics or dispatchers ... or anyone else in the system ... you’re missing the point. My words are intended to be an exhortation, a reminder that we must step up. The status quo for safety is not good enough. Safety is a water mark. Once you show the public that you can go 29 months without a major fatal passenger accident ... as we had done here in the U.S. until earlier this year... they expect it all the time.

That's where we need to go ... where that expectation is met. We have to be able to withstand volatility and guarantee the stability of the global air transportation system. My hope for this meeting is that the discussions will push us in that direction. I believe we can get there. No, actually, I *know* we can get there.

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