

FOREWORD

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is mandated to ensure the highest level of safety in American aviation. A matter of concern recently has been the increasing age of jet aircraft in the air carrier fleet. Many of these aircraft now are entering their second and third decade of use.

In June of this year, the FAA sponsored a meeting of representatives of the aviation industry to review problems associated with aging aircraft. While much of this meeting addressed issues of hardware, metal fatigue, and corrosion, there was a discussion of human factors in maintenance. Today's meeting reflects a growing interest in human factors and its potential contribution to continuing aviation safety.

I hope that the perspective of today's meeting will extend beyond just the aging aircraft problem. We should consider new technologies such as use of composite materials, for example. The effect of automation, advanced electronics, new aircraft design techniques, and training innovations also should be reviewed. Any issue that bears on the performance of maintenance personnel should be included.

All segments of the aviation industry concerned with maintenance are in attendance today. We have representatives from the Federal Aviation Administration, The National Transportation Safety Board, aircraft manufacturers, airline operators, regional airlines, helicopter operators, the maintenance training establishment, those concerned with new technologies, and, in particular, several human factors scientists with impressive research credentials relating to inspection and maintenance. With the skill and expertise represented here, I am certain we will develop positive recommendations of real value to the FAA and to aviation as we consider ways to ensure optimum use and support of maintenance personnel.

William T. Shepherd, Ph.D.
Federal Aviation Administration