

Keeping Pace



with the **FAASTeam**

It doesn't matter if you have five hours in a single-engine trainer or 10,000 hours in a business jet—every pilot can benefit from a mentor, especially experienced aviators who have local knowledge and are available to answer questions and offer guidance and support. Nor does it matter if you are a long-time mechanic and got your A&P years ago, you can always benefit from recurrent training.



Lakeland, Florida, also generates training topics by analyzing general aviation accident data. The data is organized according to category and class of the aircraft and pilot certificate level and guides the development of educational programs. Analysis of this data collected over several years reveals the five primary causal areas of general aviation accidents:

- Aeronautical decision making
- Aircraft performance and limitations
- Approaches and landings
- Aircraft control (maneuvering flight)
- Preflight planning

“We recognize that we can reach out and help people understand risks,” says Bryan Neville, National FAASafety Team Outreach Manager. “Our representatives, through seminars and personal contact, can help other pilots evaluate the risk factors associated with flying, so that they have the confidence to make the correct go or no-go decisions.”

Clover reports industry participation is critical to the team’s success, providing volunteers with crucial resources and materials to deliver timely, high-quality programs. FAASafety Team partners include not-for-profit aviation membership organizations, such as The Ninety-Nines, the National Association of Flight Instructors (NAFI), and the Society of Aviation and Flight Educators (SAFE), as well as for-profit aviation service providers, including Avemco Insurance Company and Aviation Supplies and Academics (ASA).

In addition to sponsoring live seminars, the FAASafety Team reaches thousands of pilots, mechanics, and technicians through its Web site, www.FAASafety.gov, as well as through regular e-mail notifications to more than 300,000 subscribers—a list which includes half of all U.S. pilots. The WINGS program is now administered on www.FAASafety.gov, which makes it easier for participants to record and track their progress.

Safety Starts with Sharing

Kent Lewis is extremely passionate about sharing safety information with the aviation community. The 2009 National FAASafety Team Representative of the Year, Lewis has volunteered as a FAASafety Team Representative in the Fort Worth, Texas,

“Continuous education and improving safety: That’s the focus of the FAA Safety Team,” says Kevin Clover, National FAA Safety Team Manager. And, the FAA Safety Team, or FAASafety Team, is indeed a team. Team members encompass some 120 FAA

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employees and 2,000 volunteer Representatives in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. The primary emphasis is pilot education through seminars and online training. For aviation maintenance technicians, the AMT award program reinforces and promotes a high level of professionalism and safety.

FAASafety Team members deliver about 2,500 seminars a year. Each of FAA’s eight Flight Standards regions has a dedicated regional manager who oversees anywhere from five to 25 FAASafety Team Program Managers (FPM). It’s the FPMs who oversee the volunteer Representatives. The goal is to offer programs that target specific subject areas based on the safety issues in that geographic area. For example, a Representative in Colorado may organize seminars about mountain flying, while a Los Angeles area Representative may focus on instrument flying and the dangers of VFR-into-IMC encounters.

While topics for educational programs are initiated at the local and regional level, the FAASafety Team’s Data Analysis Work Group, based in

Kent Lewis receiving his FAASTeam Representative of the Year award from Administrator Babbitt at AirVenture® 2009.



area since 2003. Lewis currently works for Delta Air Lines, with more than 23 years of flying experience, and also serves as a safety representative for the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA). He is an active general aviation pilot who helps deliver new and used Cessnas for Van Bortel Aircraft at the Arlington Municipal Airport in Arlington, Texas.

"We all get safety information, but we could be better about sharing it," Lewis says. "How do we get it to where people can use it and apply it?" To this end, he maintains a Web site called Signal Charlie (www.signalcharlie.net), which focuses on promoting the use of safety management systems (SMS), aviation leadership, and the study of human factors in aviation. Lewis has orchestrated dozens of programs on human factors and SMS and is partnering with the FAASTeam to host a two-day WINGS seminar at Dallas Love Field on March 31.

As Lewis explains on the Web site, "When trying to decide on a name for the site, I remembered my naval aviator days and the code words from the carrier, 'Signal Charlie,' which meant that the flight deck was ready for landing ops. This was always a welcome message, especially after a long flight. The Charlie signal flag also means 'Affirmative' and this represents the proactive nature of a quality safety management system, the future of aviation safety. SMS pillars are policy, risk management, assurance, and promotion. In SMS, people nurture partnerships that promote operational goals and safety. Positive communications fuel these partnerships, and Signal Charlie is meant to be a vehicle for critical team communications."

For pilots who can't get to a regional FAASTeam seminar, Web-based training offers a convenient and economical alternative. Retired airline pilot Gene Benson, a volunteer from upstate New York, uses his Web site (www.genebenson.com) as a platform to host online seminars, also known as Webinars. "My wife calls it my ministry," he explains. "Webinars have a tremendous capability to get the safety message out."

Benson designs and develops all of the material for the Webinars, which he offers for free or for a modest \$2.00 fee. For example, two programs were scheduled for January. The first

program, "How to Prevent Little Problems from Becoming Big Problems," demonstrated how airline-type procedures for dealing with abnormal situations can be easily adapted for use in general aviation. The Webinar lasted under two hours and was worth one credit toward the first phase of the WINGS program.

The second program, "Why Did They Do That; Human Factors in VFR Accidents," examined accidents involving pilots who ran out of fuel or whose airplanes lost power due to fuel contamination.

Using actual accident photos and computer recreations, the discussion explored how the accidents might have been avoided through the use of risk-management tools. This program lasted about one hour and was worth half a Knowledge Elective WINGS credit. Benson plans to offer monthly half-credit Webinars.

"It's not airplanes that cause accidents; people cause accidents," Benson says. He recalls a friend who crashed a *King Air* into the side of a mountain during an instrument approach. "Pilots are not dumb; they are smart people. We just sometimes do dumb things. Most accidents are caused by a pilot doing something when they knew better. It all comes down to pilots making good decisions."

Earning your WINGS

The main purpose of the WINGS program is to give pilots an incentive to maintain proficiency, not just currency. To sweeten the deal and encourage participation, the FAA relieves pilots, who participate in WINGS, from completing the flight review requirements of Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) section 61.56(e). See page 10 for more information on WINGS.

Ellen Nobles-Harris, a FAASTeam volunteer since 2006, has actively participated in the WINGS program since she and her husband earned their private pilot certificates in 1991. She says WINGS is an important program for pilots because it encourages safety consciousness, which as a former

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WINGS - Pilot Proficiency Program

The WINGS - Pilot Proficiency Program is designed to help individual pilots construct an educational curriculum suitable for their unique flight requirements. It encourages pilots to continue their aviation educational pursuits and requires education, review, and flight proficiency in the Areas of Operation found in current Practical Test Standards (PTS), which correspond with the leading accident causal factors.

“As an active pilot of single- and multi-engine aircraft as well as gliders, I understand the importance of recurrent training. I had participated in the “old” WINGS Program but was skeptical when the FAA launched the new program nearly two years ago.

However, after I began participating in the new program I quickly realized what an exciting, robust, and easy-to-use program it really was. I can easily customize it for the type of flying that I do. I enjoy taking quality safety courses in the comfort of my home that result in me being a better and safer pilot. It’s a bonus when my insurance company takes a 10 percent discount off my premium! Tracking my progress and achievements reminds me that aviation learning is an ongoing endeavor, and best of all, it’s free!

Completing a flight review every two years might make me legal, but I owe it to my students, passengers, and family, to be proficient, not just current.

— Todd Cameron

Why Participate?

- The greatest incentive to participate is the added level of safety and professionalism that comes with a consistent recurrent training program.
- Aviation insurance companies provide a discount on premiums for participation in WINGS, e.g., 10 percent from Avemco.
- Pilots participating in WINGS need not accomplish the flight review requirements of 14 CFR part 61 (formerly the Biennial Flight Review), if they have satisfactorily completed or currently hold the first phase, or higher, WINGS.
- Avemco Insurance Company provides airmen who have completed a phase of WINGS with the official WINGS lapel pin.

Find out more about the FAA Safety Team and about WINGS at www.FAASafety.gov.

chemical engineer at an oil refinery for more than 30 years, is a subject near and dear to her heart.

“Aviation is a lot more than getting in an airplane and flying someplace,” she says. “It’s about being part of a community of people with similar goals.” In addition to her support of the FAAS Team, Nobles-Harris has held various volunteer positions with her local chapter of The Ninety-Nines, an international organization of women pilots.

A few years ago, Nobles-Harris prepared a WINGS “cheat sheet” to guide pilots through the online documentation process, which continues to evolve. Pilots can get up-to-date tips on the WINGS program from the FAA’s official WINGS blog at faawings.blogspot.com.

“I’m hoping more people will get more comfortable with the Web site,” Nobles-Harris says. “It’s not a quick transition, but your comfort level will increase as you work with the Web site.”

Nobles-Harris suggests reaching out to your children or grandchildren if you need a computer assist. “This is a good way to bond and get them interested in aviation at the same time,” she says.

Getting Involved

If you decide after reading this article that it’s time to take charge of your own proficiency and safety, the first thing you should do is visit www.faasafety.gov and sign up for a free user account. Browse the course catalog and test your knowledge. Take the plunge and participate in the WINGS program, and, if you really want to get involved, become a FAAS Team volunteer. Kent Lewis, Gene Benson, Ellen Nobles-Harris, and 1,997 other folks all recommend it.

Or, do something really crazy: Skip poker night one month and attend a safety seminar instead. You probably won’t win any money there, but you just might learn something about flying that could save your life—and that’s priceless. 

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