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InFO

Information for Operators

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An InFO contains valuable information for operators that should help them meet certain administrative, regulatory, or operational requirements, with relatively low urgency or impact on safety. The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

Subject: Terrain Awareness and Warning Systems (TAWS) Nuisance Alerts.

Purpose: This InFO serves to inform operators about the risks associated with distraction and complacency brought about by routine use of the TAWS' terrain inhibit feature. It is also intended to ensure operators understand the importance of having procedures and training for the use of the terrain inhibit aural warning switches associated with nuisance alerts.

Background: The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has issued safety recommendations addressing controlled flight into terrain (CFIT). NTSB Safety Recommendation A-18-014 recommended the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) work with Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) Part 135 certificate holders that operate under visual flight rules (VFR) in mountainous terrain at altitudes below the required terrain clearance of the aircraft's required TAWS class to;

- Ensure that flight operations management and pilots are aware of the risks associated with distraction from continuous nuisance alerts and complacency brought about by routine use of the terrain inhibit feature;
- Review operators procedures to ensure they include risk mitigation for use of the terrain avoidance system inhibit switch.

Discussion: Controlled flight into terrain occurs when an airworthy aircraft under the complete control of the pilot is inadvertently flown into an obstacle such as terrain, or water. The pilots are generally unaware of the danger until it is too late. Most CFIT accidents occur in the approach and landing phase of flight and are often associated with non-precision approaches. Many CFIT accidents occur because of loss of situational awareness, particularly in the vertical plane. Many accidents occur when an aircraft is lined up on the centerline of an approach to an airfield. Lack of familiarity with the approach or misreading of the approach plate are common causal factors, particularly where the approach features steps down in altitude from the initial approach fix to the final approach fix.

Multiple CFIT accidents have occurred when pilots, who are flying VFR at low altitudes are presented with risks associated with rapid changes in weather resulting in loss of situational awareness. Alerts from TAWS can become a nuisance or a distraction to pilots when flying at altitudes below the alerting threshold of the system. This may result in the pilot's decision to inhibit the system. Inhibiting warning

systems and ignoring warnings, combined with deteriorating weather conditions leading to loss of visual surface reference and situational awareness, has been found to be the cause of some CFIT accidents. In some situations, aircraft impacted terrain that might have been avoided had the TAWS alert feature been uninhibited.

Recommended Action: Directors of Operations for (Part 135), Part 91 managers and Fractional Ownership Program Managers (Part 91, subpart K) should review their approved training programs to ensure procedures for the use of the terrain warning system inhibit switch is adequately addressed.

Contact: Questions or comments regarding this InFO may be directed to the Air Transportation Division's 135 Flight Operations Section, at 9-AFS-200-Correspondence@faa.gov.