Flight Safety AUSTRALIA

OUR ARTICLE, "AIR-head does belly-flop" on page 18 is bound to cause a stir.

That's because it covers an incident involving CASA's general manager, GA operations, Clinton McKenzie.

The very cynical will see the publication of details of McKenzie's gear-up incident as a "plea for sympathy" and a whitewash. Others will see it as CASA coming clean, and being open about the activities of its officers.

In fact, it is neither. From a public relations point of view, it would probably have been better to let the matter rest.

The publication of McKenzie's story as a *What Went Wrong?* article is just like any other *What Went Wrong?* It is intended to draw out the safety lessons from an incident so that others can learn from the experience.

The CASA Board are right behind the idea. The Board has asked that CASA staff who are involved in incidents or accidents write a *What Went Wrong?* about it.

At *Flight Safety Australia*, we appreciate a good story.

Of course, as a CASA staff member, McKenzie is ineligible for the prizes that are offered for our *What Went Wrong?* section.

It is difficult to admit to mistakes, but it is necessary from a safety education point of view.

Fortunately, our readers do not have to put their names to their articles. Your entries can be published without attribution, if requested.

We look forward to increased interest in our *What Went Wrong?* section.

– Mark Wolff, editor.

Blown over

Your article in Flight Safety on ramp safety was good, but by talking only about cabin crew it missed some important points.

From a licensed aircraft maintenance engineer's point of view, there is enormous danger, not just from jet blast, but also from prop wash, even from small aircraft.

Great damage can be done to other aircraft, especially if the controls are not secure, when a plane taxis past.

This can introduce great, unsuspected damage to the airframe, which can have serious safety effects later.

– Arnold Long, CASA airworthiness inspector.

Kapton concern

I feel the need to air my concerns about your story last issue on Kapton wire. Firstly I would like to suggest that it was not the media who speculated that Kapton wire was responsible for the 1998 Swissair crash, because the media probably doesn't know what Kapton wire is.

I would say that it was the professionals who were investigating the accident who came up with the speculation.

Secondly, it is also well known that Kapton wire is used in most commercial and military aircraft, not just the MD-11 involved in that crash, and most of those aircraft are on the Australian register.

I can appreciate that this is a potential problem of large proportions. No air safety authority would be willing to ground most of the airlines.

We don't want to drive the public away from using airlines, and the expense of rewiring the aircraft would be too high to consider by the operators or manufacturer.

But most distressing is the fact that, given the Swissair crash and numerous other electrical faults, failures and fires as a result of Kapton wire, manufacturers are still using it on new installations, and safety authorities are still allowing its use.

The US Navy has done some testing of its own, and as a result has banned Kapton wire for critical uses aboard its aircraft. It seems that Kapton wire can cause arc tracking, a type of wiring fire.

It would be nice if our air safety authorities could take on this issue, and perform some testing and investigation of their own to put the concern and speculation to rest.

– Henryk Schneider, Hawthorn, Victoria.

Mr Schneider is correct in noting that many aircraft in Australia use Kapton wire.

CASA has not been advised of any problem caused by that insulation. The applicable aircraft manufacturers all support the continued use of Kapton, and the major regulatory authorities have not required any action to change the wire in these aircraft.

The recent story screened by ABC TV's 4 Corners *program alluded to a number of overseas accidents attributed to faults caused by Kapton wire. Technical information provided by official investigations of those accidents does not provide a direct link between Kapton wire and the accidents.*

It would be irresponsible of CASA, on the basis of suppositions, to require Australian operators – alone among the world – to undertake very expensive action in regard to Kapton wire.

The US Navy's action was taken as a result of tests under extreme weather and battle conditions.

Civil aviation regulations only allow CASA to issue mandatory action to correct safety problems.

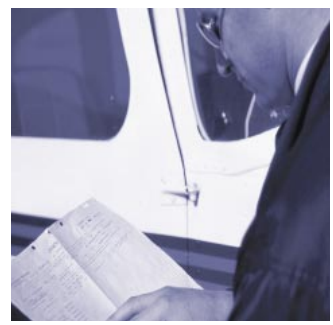
All aircraft wire deteriorates with age and must be treated with care, not just Kapton wire.

– Eugene Holzapfel, manager, technical specialists, CASA.

Congratulations

Congratulations on another excellent edition – however, I am curious as to how many of our aviators picked the errors on pages 4-5 and page 56, where Darwin terminal and apron pictures were reverse.

– John McArdle, Adelaide airport.



Erratum
Maintenance release

THE JULY-AUGUST EDITION OF Flight Safety Australia contained some minor errors in the article on maintenance releases, entitled, "The write stuff".

The statement, "When this maintenance is certified on the release it must also be certified in the aircraft log book" is misleading.

The reason is that the purpose of having a provision in part 2 to clear maintenance required and defects endorsed is to get away from requiring the aircraft log book on site to enter and certify for maintenance carried out during the validity of the maintenance release. If a lifed component is fitted during the period of validity of the maintenance release it is the maintenance organisation's responsibility when carrying out the next periodic inspection to transfer the information pertaining to that component into the aircraft records, that is serial number/TBO/part life and so on. This is quite different to entering and certifying.

– Bob Hoy, CASA airworthiness inspector.