

The future is here, and it's speeding up. Our cover story this issue, "Fast forward to free flight" looks at international efforts to bring the benefits of satellite and digital technology to aviation.

Moves to implement the future air navigation system, also known as CNS/ATM, will not only improve communication, but also permit greater navigational flexibility than ever before.

CNS/ATM will accommodate more traffic at increased levels of safety, save time and fuel, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce workload stress in the process.

CNS/ATM doesn't just affect the airlines. General aviation will also benefit from an airspace environment which is more efficient and easier to use – a fact that will allow pilots to focus on flying the aircraft.

There are few better illustrations of the need to "fly the aircraft" than the accident which killed entertainer John Denver in 1997.

In this issue we look at the US safety investigation report which found that Denver allowed his attention to be distracted from the task of flying the aircraft to attend to a fuel problem.

Unfortunately this kind of accident is not unique. In one well documented example, a Lockheed 1011 Tristar crashed into the ground because the entire flight crew were focused on changing a faulty landing gear indicator bulb.

John Denver's story should prompt pilots and operators to ask whether or not they have sufficient defences in place to guard against a similar event.



Human factors fallacies

THERE are several points in Dan Maurino's article "Human factors fallacies" in your January-February edition with which I disagree.

He says that the axiom "Safety first" is untrue since everyone knows that it's dollars that count. This may be true of many operators. However, I am happy to say that I worked for 28 years with a major carrier whose policy was plainly safety first and who did not question a captain's decision on line, even if it cost money, if safety was plainly the issue.

Captain Maurino's statement that safety is chiefly the safety officer's business is not generally true of the industry. What pilot or flight attendant isn't interested in safety? For that matter, what company?

His assertion, "If you go by the book, you will not ensure safety" is untrue. Going by the book is one good way of ensuring that you don't make a bad decision or technical error.

Lastly, I cannot subscribe to his view that 100 per cent of accidents are caused by human factors.

– John Winslow,
Normanhurst, NSW.

Dan Maurino responds: *The article was an edited summary of a talk I gave last November at Australia's Safesies conference in Canberra. It is therefore logical that the encapsulation of the concepts I discussed into a one-page*

article might generate questions.

Organisations in production systems, such as aviation, are formed to pursue production goals. The production goal for aviation organisations is to transport people and goods, not to produce safety. The first priority is to stay in business, safely. Safety is therefore a core value of aviation organisations, but not the first priority.

While it is true that all those involved in aviation must be accountable for upholding the core values of safety, there should be only one person with the formal, organisational responsibility for implementing the structures and protocols which enable the upholding of these values. We are all concerned about our health, but that does not turn us into instant physicians.

Borrowing from Captain Ted Murphy, President of the International Federation of Air Line Pilot's Associations, "When safety is everybody's responsibility, nobody is accountable for it".

Humans design, manufacture, deploy, regulate, train, operate and defend the aviation system. Therefore, when a breakdown in the system occurs, what other than human intervention could be suspected?

Dan Maurino is co-ordinator, flight safety and human factors program, International Civil Aviation Organization.

Errata

Judgement impacts AOC holders

LAST issue's article in the "Case notes" section on an Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) ruling to uphold a decision to cancel an operator's AOC contained two errors. The article stated that the power lines ran across the runway. They did not. The power lines ran across the extended centre line of the runway. The article also said that the aircraft carried 1,650 litres of chemicals.

The evidence given at the AAT was that the aircraft carried a load in the order of 900 litres.

Flying ops quizzes

THERE have been several queries about the flying ops quiz in the January-February issue. These were received after the cut-off date for publication in the March-April issue. For question 9, "When would carriage of serviceable HF radio communications be mandatory for flight in a designated remote area in which continuous VHF communications cannot be maintained?" we had the answer as (d), and we stated, "... HF must be carried if an ELT is not carried." This statement is correct, but option (d) actually read "Under all circumstances". Option (a) was the correct answer, "When an emergency locator transmitter (ELT) is not carried".

The TAF given in the Townsville approach quiz should have had a VIS of 4,000m, in which case (c) would have been the correct answer for question one. The explanation for the answer is also incorrect.

Question 3 for the Townsville approach actually had two technically correct answers, (a) and (d). However, as the question asks for the minimum required, the answer given (d) is the best answer. By doing an ILS approach, this also covers you for VOR and VOR/DME for the next 90 days.

SUBMITTING LETTERS

- Ideal length for publication is 150 words. Longer letters may be edited to save space.
- Include your name, address and phone number.
- Send letters to *Flight Safety Australia*, PO Box 2005, Canberra, ACT, 2601; faxes (02) 6217 1950; e-mails, fsa.magazine@casa.gov.au.
- The best letter wins a \$50 voucher from Airservices publications centre.