

# TO ERR IS HUMAN...



PhotoDisc

An online database of aircraft defects can help you avoid mistakes, says Trevor Robinson.

**M**ost people know the quote as “To err is human, to forgive divine”.

But the full quote is a little different. It was an expression recorded by the famous eighteenth century US scientist, Benjamin Franklin – you know, the one who flew a kite to verify the nature of electricity and lightning. In full it goes, “To err is human, to repent divine; to persist devilish.”

In other words, you should not just forgive error, you should do something so that errors are not repeated.

If you are going to try to prevent repeating errors, faults or mistakes, it's handy to be able to check out a full listing of experiences maintainers have had with defects. These reported experiences become service difficulty reports (SDR).

The SDR system is an online database of defect reports submitted to the Civil Aviation Safety Authority by Australian aircraft owners, operators and maintainers. The system gives an overview of the health of the Australian fleet as well as information about specific defects. Data supplied by owners and operators and manufacturers from other countries is also reproduced where it is relevant for Australia.

An upgrade of the IT platform supporting the SDR system has improved useability by allowing users to retrieve highly customised information for a specific aircraft, engine or component part number.

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maintainers and regulators to react to potential threats to airworthiness. Deficient designs can be modified, training failings can be addressed and maintenance errors identified and corrected quickly and professionally.

**The bigger picture:** Like any software system the SDR system is only as good as the information received. Although it is tempting when submitting a service difficulty report to put in only the basics – aircraft type, failed component details and the submitter's best guess as to the cause – this is often insufficient to enable a comprehensive assessment by other users of the system.

Identification of a failed part within a component or assembly gives only a small part of a bigger picture. What system of maintenance was used? What type of operation is the aircraft employed in? What are the skill sets of pilot and maintainers connected with the operation of the aircraft? The questions are endless, but the answers are

important in determining if a wider problem exists.

CASA airworthiness specialists analyse SDRs to identify and monitor emerging trends in aircraft faults. The analysis looks at the causes of aircraft and component faults, sometimes leading to the issue of Airworthiness Directives or Airworthiness Bulletins. These tell aircraft operators and maintenance organisations the steps to take to deal with faults. At the same time, CASA brings the problems to the attention of the aircraft or component manufacturer, whether they are based in Australia or overseas.

Many aircraft owners, operators and maintainers say they are stumped when it comes to the level of investigation necessary before submitting an SDR. Some aircraft owners express surprise when they are told that the main responsibility for defect investigation rest with them.

If you want to discuss reporting a defect you can call 131 757 or 02 6217 1860 and ask for the SDR administrator, or you can email SDR staff at [sdr@casa.gov.au](mailto:sdr@casa.gov.au)

You can also send a report in by mail: Civil Aviation Safety Authority, service difficulty report, Reply Paid 2005, Canberra ACT 2601.

To submit an online report or view other reports, go to [casa.gov.au/airworth/sdr](http://casa.gov.au/airworth/sdr). Further information is available at [casa.gov.au/avreg/aircraft/sdr](http://casa.gov.au/avreg/aircraft/sdr).

*Trevor Robinson is a CASA maintenance specialist.*