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SAFETYWIRE

Operations: Improving Your Emergency Response Plan

Source: Business Aviation Insider May/June

An emergency response plan (ERP) can be a critical resource for handling difficult situations before they escalate into a crisis for your flight operation or company.

“An emergency is something abnormal that poses a threat to life, limb, property or their good name as a business,” said Stephen Burgess, emergency operations center manager for Fireside Partners. “Developing and following an ERP can help mitigate the impacts of that emergency.”

An effective ERP may include input and participation from personnel in several departments across the company. The definition of what constitutes an emergency, and what resources will be needed in response, can also vary greatly between companies.

“The best ERPs start off with a risk assessment to determine the necessary individuals or resources to interface between stakeholders,” said Amanda Ferraro, CAM, CEO of Aviation Safety Solutions. “Do you need public relations involved? HR? Legal?

6021 South Syracuse Way
Suite 301
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
+1 513.852.5110
+1 800.361.2216
argus.sales@argus.aero

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>
> **AMANDA FERRARO** , *CAM, CEO of Aviation Safety Solutions*

"The event may not even seem like a serious ordeal, but maybe it's brought publicity to your organization, especially as social media has become so prevalent," she continued. "An ERP will be helpful in organizing those resources and getting the right individuals involved in handling the situation."

Keep in mind "an ERP doesn't have to be hundreds of pages," Ferraro said. "I've seen ERPs developed around commercially-available checklist apps that work really well for some organizations."

Basic templates are also available from the FAA and NBAA, she added, to assist smaller flight operations in developing their ERP. Examination of past emergency situations can also help inform an effective plan to handle similar events in the future.

Regardless of your flight operation's size, one often overlooked – but critical – part of an ERP is employee and family support. Having such guidance at hand can be invaluable in the aftermath of more serious, or even fatal, situations.

"Smaller operators must wear more hats in terms of response duties," Burgess said. "Somebody might be not only running the response at large but also taking point on any communication and media concerns. And they may even be the main person coordinating family support.

"The challenges to handling an emergency are definitely magnified for smaller flight operations," he continued. "Those operators must identify what resources they have available and ask themselves, 'what can we handle? Where is the threshold where we'd need to rely on outside support?'"

Also, for an ERP to be truly effective, it must be a living document, not something forgotten in a dust-covered binder on the shelf.

6021 South Syracuse Way
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“You should continually and frequently review your plan and adjust it accordingly,” Burgess said. “Take five minutes to ask, ‘how can we make this better? Are these steps clear enough? Is this overly complex, or is it too simple?’”

“The first thing you start with is never the last thing you’ll use,” said Ferraro. “Anything and everything in your ERP can be adapted as needed.

“Our industry is well-prepared to respond to canned training scenarios,” she concluded. “When faced with something new or unusual, however, I’ve seen flight departments forget entirely there was an ERP available.”

Further guidance to help inform your operation’s ERP is available in NBAA’s Guidance on Company Response to an Aviation Accident.

NBAA
National Business Aviation Association

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
E PLURIBUS UNUM

6021 South Syracuse Way
Suite 301
Greenwood Village, CO 80111

+1 513.852.5110
+1 800.361.2216

argus.sales@argus.aero

NTSB Division Coordinates Family Assistance

Caring for the needs of family members and others affected by an accident can be one of the most difficult duties for any flight operation. However, there is an important resource available to assist during times of crisis.

The Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996 called on the NTSB to coordinate the disaster responses among local and national agencies, disaster relief organizations and air carriers to address the concerns of families following major aviation accidents.

One result was the formation of the NTSB Transportation Disaster Assistance (TDA) Division, which serves as the primary resource for survivors, families and friends during NTSB accident investigations. The TDA Division provides updates throughout the board's investigative process and helps those affected with accessing available family assistance resources.

While typically called upon to assist following major accidents, the board program "will work closely with any operator that is interested in developing or refining their family assistance programs," including business aviation flight departments, said TDA Division Chief Elias Kontanis. "The board understands the importance of addressing the needs of those most significantly affected by transportation disasters – the survivors and families of those involved."

6021 South Syracuse Way
Suite 301
Greenwood Village, CO 80111

+1 513.852.5110
+1 800.361.2216

argus.sales@argus.aero

FAA Reminds Operators of Rotorcraft Bird Strike Study

(Source: AIN Online; By Gordon Gilbert May12, 2023)

Helicopter operators should consider migratory patterns of bird populations and use it to plan and fly routes, according to the FAA. (Photo: Ian Sharp / Migrating Birds on Saltmarshes via Wikimedia Commons)

The FAA recently issued Information for Operators 23005 (a copy of the InFO is included at the end of this article) reiterating a 2016 government/industry rotorcraft bird strike working group study and summarizing its recommendations. For example, helicopter operators should learn about the local bird population and use it to plan and fly routes. “Among the key considerations are seasonal migratory times and concentration patterns within the typical operating area.”

Other recommendations include “reducing airspeed and gaining altitude.” The study found that “77 percent of bird strikes occur at airspeeds greater than 80 knots, particularly at lower altitudes” and “there is a 32 percent decrease of bird strike likelihood for every 1,000 feet gained above 500 feet agl.” Birds fly higher at night, “so an increase in altitude may be needed even more at night than during the day.” A helmet and visor, at least for helicopter crewmembers, should be worn when practical.

Finally, the study recommends “using taxi and/or landing lights in a continuous mode during sunny conditions and at night when practical, and use a 2-Hz pulsed mode during partly cloudy conditions, and/or install lighting systems that provide the equivalent with white incandescent, high-intensity discharge or light emitting diodes.”

6021 South Syracuse Way
Suite 301
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
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+1 800.361.2216
argus.sales@argus.aero

Following its 2016 investigation of numerous helicopter bird strikes, the FAA's working group concluded that little information was provided to operators about bird strike hazards. Consequently, the working group made additional recommendations to reduce the likelihood of an injurious bird strike. Its findings and recommendations were published in December 2017.

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration

InFO

Information for Operators

InFO 23005
DATE: 04/20/23

Flight Standards Service
Washington, DC

http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/info

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: Bird Strike Safety Information for Helicopter Operations.

Purpose: This InFO provides information to helicopter operators, including flight schools and flight training facilities, about bird strike hazards.

Background: Following investigations of bird strikes involving rotorcraft, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) tasked the Aviation Rulemaking Advisory Committee (ARAC) to provide recommendations regarding bird strike protection rulemaking, policy, or guidance for normal category rotorcraft; to evaluate existing bird strike protection standards for transport category rotorcraft; and to provide recommendations for enhancement. The ARAC established the Rotorcraft Bird Strike Working Group (RBSWG), composed of industry manufacturers and rotorcraft operators, to provide advice and recommendations to the ARAC. The RBSWG studied bird strike reports for rotorcraft in the National Wildlife Strike Database. The RBSWG found little information is provided to helicopter operators, including flight schools and flight training facilities, about bird strike hazards.

Discussion: The RBSWG studied numerous reported bird strikes to both Part 27 normal category and Part 29 transport category rotorcraft. The RBSWG evaluated the engineering involved with protecting these rotorcraft, which resulted in recommendations to the ARAC that rotorcraft use a risk-based approach (based on number of seats) to meet bird strike airworthiness standards. The RBSWG determined the installation of bird strike resistant windshields could lead to significant improvement, however these measures were not as easily implemented in the lighter Part 27 rotorcraft. Consequently, the RBSWG made additional recommendations to reduce the likelihood of an injurious bird strike. The RBSWG report is publicly available at the following webpage: link.

Recommended Action: Helicopter operators, including flight schools and flight training facilities should complete the following actions:

- Learn about the local bird population and use it to plan and fly routes. Among the key considerations are seasonal migratory times and concentration patterns within the typical operating area.
- Reduce airspeed when practical. Three out of four bird strikes (77%) occur during airspeeds greater than 80 knots. When operating rotorcraft in areas of high bird concentrations, the

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6021 South Syracuse Way
Suite 301
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
+1 513.852.5110
+1 800.361.2216
argus.sales@argus.aero

likelihood of a damaging bird strike goes up as airspeed increases. When operating in these areas, fly at 80 knots or less, particularly when at lower altitudes.

- Increase Altitude. Increase altitude as quickly as possible and practical, when allowed by other flight variables. There is a 32% decrease of bird strike likelihood for every 1,000 feet gained above 500 feet AGL. Also, birds fly higher at night, so an increase in altitude may be needed even more at night than during the day.

- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE). A helmet and visor, at least for the crewmembers, should be worn when practical. This is one of the simplest acts that can improve safety in rotorcraft operations.

- Use taxi and/or landing lights in a continuous mode during sunny conditions and at night when practical, and use a 2-Hz pulsed mode during partly cloudy conditions, and/or install lighting systems that provide the equivalent with white incandescent, high intensity discharge (HID), or light emitting diode (LED) lighting.

Contact: Questions or comments regarding this InFO should be directed to the FAA's General Aviation and Commercial Division at 202-267-1100 or email at 9-AFS-800-Correspondence@faa.gov.

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6021 South Syracuse Way
Suite 301
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argus.sales@argus.aero

SAFETY MANAGER'S CORNER

Mental health awareness is key:

Pilot Mental Fitness

Pilot Medical Certifications and How Mental Health is Assessed

- The FAA's regulations require airline pilots to undergo a medical exam with an Aviation Medical Examiner (AME) every six months to five years, depending on the type of flying they do and their age.
- Aviation Medical Examiners are trained to determine the pilot's mental health and fitness to fly.
  - Before this medical exam, pilots are required to report any health professional visits during the previous three years, all medications being taken, and other medical history on their medical application form. This form includes questions about mental health.
  - During this examination, pilots must disclose all existing physical and psychological conditions and medications.
- Based on the answers on the form and the examination, an AME may ask further questions about mental health conditions or symptoms.
- The AME can request additional psychological testing, or defer the application to the Office of Aerospace Medicine if he or she is concerned that further evaluation is necessary.

Additional FAA Oversight

- If the FAA receives information from another source that a pilot may have a mental health condition, the Office of Aerospace Medicine can direct the pilot to provide specific documentation and/or a psychiatric and psychological evaluation from a mental health care professional, in order to make a determination about the pilot's suitability for certification.
- If a pilot experiences an incident that appears medically related, the FAA will request additional medical information.
- In 2016, the Pilot Fitness Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ARC) provided several recommendations to the FAA about pilot medical fitness. The ARC was established to evaluate pilot mental health, after the German Wings 9525 incident. The FAA has acted on several of those recommendations, including:
  - Expand training in mental health issues provided to AMEs in the AME Basic and Refresher seminars. The FAA has done this.
  - Encourage Pilot Peer Support programs organized by airlines and unions. The FAA has done this and also provides additional mental health training to peer support volunteers.

How the FAA is Reducing the Stigma of Mental Health, Help Pilots Receive Care

- The FAA encourages pilots to seek help if they have a mental health condition since most, if treated, do not disqualify a pilot from flying.
  - However, certain medical conditions such as a psychosis, bipolar disorder and some types of personality disorder automatically disqualify a pilot from obtaining an FAA medical certificate.
  - Former FAA Administrator Steve Dickson addressed pilot mental health at the University of North Dakota Mental Health Summit.
- During the last several years, the FAA has invested resources to eliminate the stigma around mental health in the aviation community so pilots seek treatment. This includes:
  - Increased mental health training for medical examiners
  - Supported industry-wide research and clinical studies on pilot mental health
  - Hired additional mental health professionals to expand in-house expertise and to decrease wait times for return-to-fly decisions
  - Initiated clinical research to address the frequency of cognitive testing in airmen on antidepressant medication
- The FAA developed a plan to support individuals on special issuance for substance dependence. The plan allows the agency to provide long-term support for pilots in recovery.

The FAA has produced this short video located here in order to better explain the issue.

Pilots Minute Video

6021 South Syracuse Way
Suite 301
Greenwood Village, CO 80111

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+1 800.361.2216

argus.sales@argus.aero

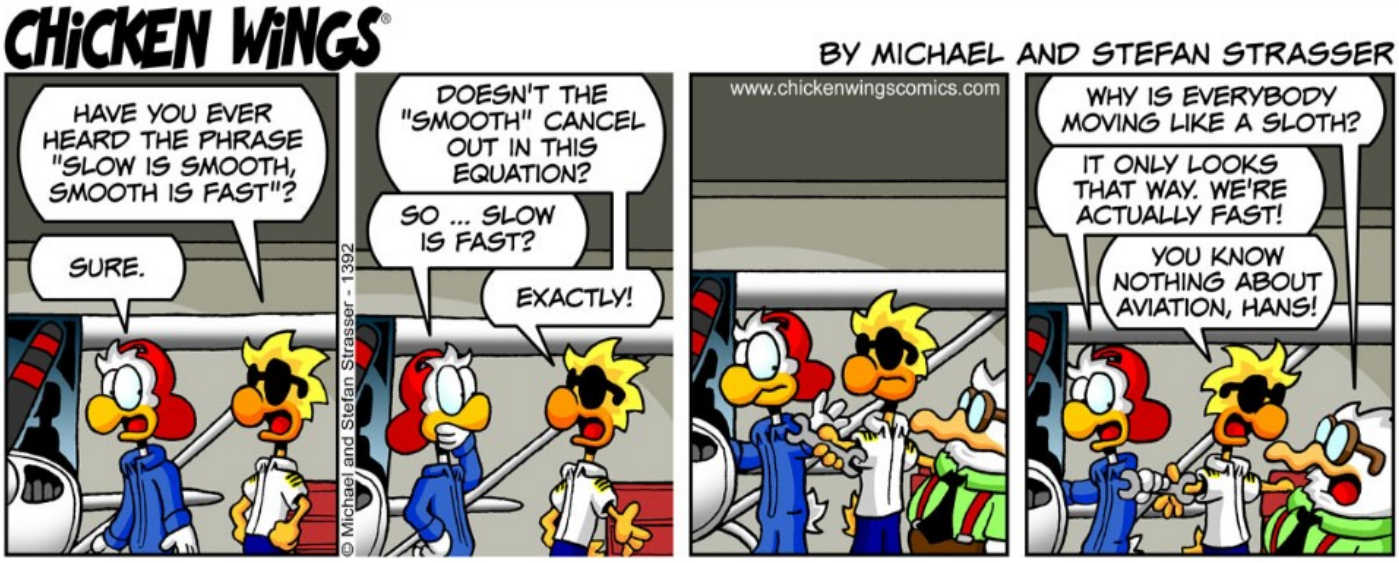
Quote of the Month

“You were warned what defeat would bring. I will tolerate your weakness no longer.”

– Darth Vader

This, in the strongest tone possible, is what safety management is about. We find the weakness, and then we announce to everyone we won’t tolerate it. Then, we fix it. Welcome to the dark side. Do not underestimate the power…..of the Dark Side. As a side note, no choking the staff.

On Short Final...



6021 South Syracuse Way
Suite 301
Greenwood Village, CO 80111

+1 513.852.5110
+1 800.361.2216

argus.sales@argus.aero

CONTACT LIST

Susan Cadwallader
susan.cadwallader@prism.aero
VP,SMS Services

Jenna Albrecht
Jenna.albrecht@prism.aero
Program Manager, SMS Services

Wayne Ehlke
Wayne.Ehlke@prism.aero
Safety Analyst, SMS Services

Rhodri Norton-Quick
Rhodri.Norton-Quick@prism.aero
Safety Analyst, SMS Services

6021 S. Syracuse Way, Ste 302
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
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Aviation Lead Auditor Training (ALAT)
Denver, CO

Sept 26 to Sept 28, 2023—PRISM Course
Safety Management System (SMS)
Denver, CO

Oct 30 to Nov 3, 2023—PROS Course
Aviation Lead Auditor Training (ALAT)
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Go to Upcoming Training Classes to register.

+1 513.852.5110
+1 800.361.2216
argus.sales@argus.aero