



PRISM

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NEWSLETTER

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SAFETYWIRE



**Mitigating Potential Safety
Issues Due to Workforce
Shortages**

Page 2

**Safety Starts on
the Ground**

Page 4

**ACSF Data Shows
Stable Bizav Risk
Amid 2026
Pressures**

Page 8

**Safety Manager's Corner:
New Feature in PRISM SMS –
Export Manager**

Page 10

Mitigating Potential Safety Issues Due to Workforce Shortages

(Source: NBAA Business Aviation Insider, Sept/Oct 2026)



Photo © Morgan Anderson Photography

A March 2026 NBAA Safety Committee article on workforce shortages reflected the panel's concern about the impact of workforce challenges related to new employees and high rates of turnover. Maintenance staffing gaps, pilot fatigue and training bottlenecks would most likely impact safety in the next 6 to 12 months, warned the panel. The issue prompts two critical questions: What immediate mitigation strategies should operators prioritize? And what steps is the industry taking to mitigate these risks?

In an informal NBAA survey, pilots and aviation maintenance technicians (AMTs) were flagged as most affected by shortages in terms of safety, yet 62% of respondents said they haven't seen a significant safety decline. Has business aviation benefited from pilots and AMTs more highly qualified than really necessary to do the job?

"The airlines have had to lower entry requirements to address their own shortages. Now it's the same for business aviation," said NBAA Safety Committee member Walter Kraujalis, president, Safety Standup. "Though this would be considered by some as a risky lowering of standards, I see it more as a narrowing of the margin between the experience we're used to hiring and what's actually adequate – a shift from highly qualified to medium qualified." Operators can no longer assume that margin exists; they need to build it deliberately through competency-based training and tighter standardization.

Inspection Redundancy, Safety Audits, Mentorships

The industry is responding with updated procedures to maintain safety margins despite reduced staffing. “Operators need to take on more training responsibility themselves rather than outsourcing it entirely – sending a new hire to [a major training center] and expecting them to return fully ready isn’t realistic when those training organizations are just as stretched by workforce pressures and can’t provide the operator-specific depth a new hire actually needs,” Kraujalis said.

“Operators need to take on more training responsibility themselves rather than outsourcing it entirely.”

WALTER KRAUJALIS *President, Safety Standup*

Teams within organizations need their own change-management approach. In maintenance quality assurance, add redundancy to inspection sign-offs and increase safety audits. In CRM and scheduling, intentional crew pairing and captain-mentor training can outperform generic refreshers.

Consider revisiting new safety policies and mentorship. Taking a proactive approach to risk mitigation regarding new hires and crew pairings would be good places to start.

“Revisiting standard operating procedures and flight risk assessment tools to ensure they account for new hires with varying and potentially limited backgrounds would be prudent to ensure they’re capturing the new hazards present with these new hires,” said Tony Foster, Ph.D., head of the Academics-Aviation Department at the University of Dubuque. Meet them where they are and train accordingly.

Where the Industry Can Grow

Business aviation organizations are poised to leverage data, technology and cross-functional collaboration. This includes safety management systems (SMS) and flight operations quality assurance (FOQA), to proactively identify and mitigate safety risks.

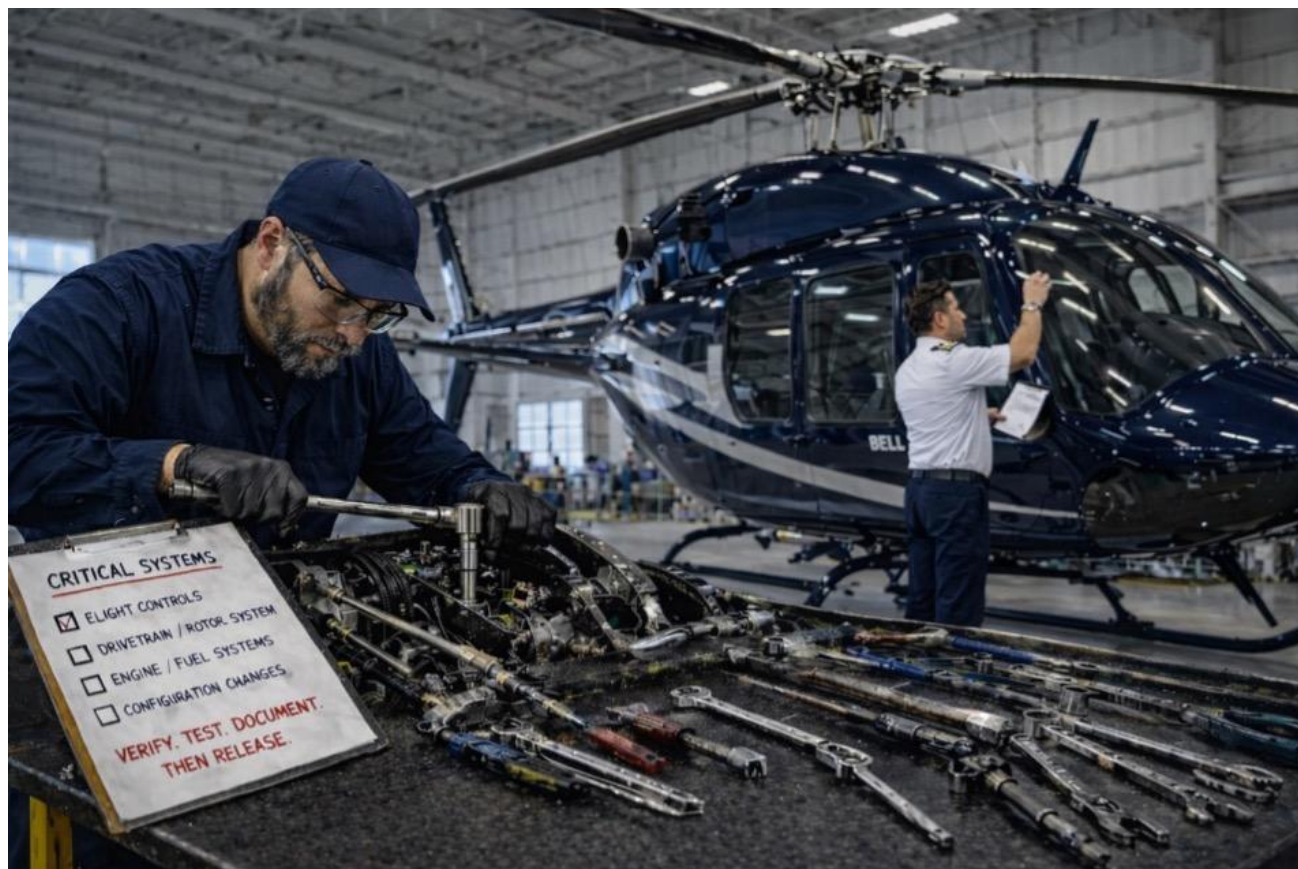
This is where the industry has room to grow. Too many operators still treat SMS and FOQA as compliance programs rather than predictive tools. “The opportunity is to connect workforce data – staffing levels, turnover, experience mix, overtime – into the same risk-management process that tracks operational hazards,” said Kraujalis. “Without correlating staffing metrics to FOQA exceedance trends or SMS hazard reports, operators miss the leading indicators that would let them intervene before a near-miss happens.”

AI agents could change this by monitoring data in real time instead of waiting for periodic reviews, spotting issues like staffing gaps and rising exceedances weeks earlier and giving safety teams a longer window to act before risk becomes an event.

[Review NBAA Safety Committee resources at nbaa.org/safety.](https://nbaa.org/safety)

Safety Starts on the Ground

(Source: Mark Wegle, USHST Fall 2026 Newsletter)



When we talk about helicopter safety, the conversation usually starts with pilots, weather decisions, mission pressure, risk assessments, and similar factors. All of those elements are critically important, and that aspect of safety begins well before the rotors ever turn.

Every safe flight, however, actually starts much earlier, often hours or even days before a rotor ever spins, it's when maintenance professionals put their hands on the aircraft. I have often heard maintenance described as the "last line of defense," and that phrase has made me pause and think, are they really? Before you settle on an answer, it is worth taking a closer look at what happens behind the scenes.

Low Frequency Does Not Mean Low Risk

While maintenance related errors account for a relatively small share of helicopter accidents, their impact is disproportionately severe, reflecting a low frequency but high consequence risk profile. Across the broader helicopter accident landscape, maintenance errors typically account for approximately 14% to 21% of accidents, roughly one out of every six. Although that percentage is lower than other contributing accident categories, it would be a mistake to dismiss maintenance as a marginal contributor to risk.

Research consistently shows that when maintenance induced accidents do occur, they frequently happen soon after maintenance is completed. In fact, approximately 31 percent of maintenance related accidents occur within the first 10 flight hours following maintenance, a phenomenon commonly referred to as maintenance error infant mortality. These are latent errors, issues not detected during maintenance or return to service checks, that only reveal themselves once the aircraft is back in the operational environment.

To be clear, this is not an indictment of maintenance professionals. On the contrary, maintainers generally perform at a very high level, and errors are relatively rare. But aviation does not grade on intent, we grade on outcome. When a maintenance error does slip through, the consequences can be immediate, severe, and unforgiving, particularly in helicopter operations.

No Margin for Error

Unlike many fixed wing aircraft, helicopters often do not have the luxury of altitude, time, or autorotation options when something goes wrong. Many operate single engine, at low altitude, in confined or unimproved landing zones, frequently at night, and often under intense operational pressure in EMS, utility, or public safety missions. These operating realities significantly increase vulnerability when a maintenance related issue exists. That is why precision maintenance is not simply a matter of regulatory compliance; it is a matter of survivability. Poor maintenance practices do not just degrade aircraft reliability; they can unintentionally set pilots up for failure before the flight ever begins.

That vulnerability underscores an important reality that experienced aviation professionals already recognize, not all maintenance tasks present the same level of risk. Some tasks have a direct and immediate effect on aircraft controllability, performance, or safety, and others may reveal themselves at a later date. In either case, these critical tasks demand heightened attention and additional safeguards.

In many situations, FAA regulations, manufacturer maintenance manuals, or an operator's FAA approved maintenance program explicitly require operational checks, functional tests, or post maintenance evaluations before an aircraft can be returned to service. Even when these steps are not specifically mandated, FAA inspectors routinely expect a higher level of scrutiny for certain systems because experience has shown that errors in these areas carry disproportionate consequences.

High risk maintenance areas typically include work on flight control systems and rigging, drivetrain and rotor system components, engine and fuel systems, and configuration or equipment changes. Errors in these areas, especially those that are subtle, incomplete, or assumed to be correct, can quickly turn a routine flight into an emergency. In Part 135 operations, these practices directly support the certificate holder's responsibility to ensure the aircraft is truly airworthy before release to service. When required operational checks or post maintenance evaluations are skipped, rushed, or poorly documented, it is not just a procedural lapse, it is a breakdown in both compliance and risk management.

If Knowledge Isn't the Problem, What Is?

Even when we assume a highly trained workforce, strong regulatory oversight, and clearly identified critical maintenance tasks, an important question remains, why do maintenance related accidents still occur? In most cases, the root cause is not a lack of technical knowledge. Instead, investigations consistently point to human factors influences, the same cognitive, behavioral, and environmental pressures seen throughout aviation operations. Not exactly a surprise, is it?

Maintenance related accidents are seldom the result of ignorance or incompetence. More often, they stem from familiar human factors such as tasks being interrupted and resumed later, assumptions that someone else must have finished the job, hardware installed incorrectly or torqued improperly, routine tasks rushed because they have been done countless times before, normalization of deviation, and fatigue related impairment. These factors should feel familiar because they are not technical failures, they are human ones hence the name. Just like pilots, maintainers operate under fatigue, distraction, time pressure, and external stressors, including life outside the hangar. Maintenance does not occur in a vacuum, and neither do the conditions that shape decision making.

Strengthening the System

At this point, you may be asking yourself whether a solution exists or whether this industry simply keeps repeating the same cycle while expecting different results. It would be convenient to claim there is a one size fits all solution, but the reality is far more complex. Aviation is a multidimensional system operated by humans, and human factors will always exist. That reality, however, should never serve as an alibi. Finger pointing rarely improves outcomes, yet it often becomes the default response when something goes wrong. A far more productive approach is building systems that catch mistakes before the aircraft ever leaves the ground.

Some of the most effective and low-cost improvements are rooted in standardization. Consistent torque verification methods, uniform documentation and sign off expectations, and defined inspection steps for critical systems reduce reliance on memory, highlight deviations, and improve cross checking between technicians. This is where the concept of an extra set of eyes becomes valuable, both figuratively and literally. Additional verification does not slow good maintenance, it strengthens it. These practices are not signs of mistrust or inefficiency; they are indicators of professional discipline shaped by hard earned lessons across the helicopter industry. In the end, extra verification protects everyone, including the maintainer, the pilot, the operator, and those who depend on the aircraft performing exactly as expected.

Another simple but highly effective solution is good old communication, both verbal and written. Transparent and non-retaliatory communication among mechanics, directors of maintenance, pilots, and operational leadership is crucial to safe operations. Good maintenance does not exist without good communication. Clear dialogue reduces assumptions, closes gaps, and ensures that all parties are aligned. Sometimes improvement starts with something as simple as setting pride aside and asking for clarification when expectations are unclear. Leadership also plays a decisive role, as safety culture is set from the top down in a flight department. What leaders prioritize quickly becomes what teams value. Safety must be consistently reinforced over schedule, quality over speed, and questions over assumptions.

Lastly, although it may sound counterintuitive, near misses are gifts. They provide valuable insight without the cost of an accident or loss of life. Near misses expose procedural weaknesses, training gaps, and organizational or environmental pressures that might otherwise remain hidden. Aviation does not often offer second chances, and when it does, those opportunities should be used to learn and improve before consequences become irreversible. So, take the mulligan.

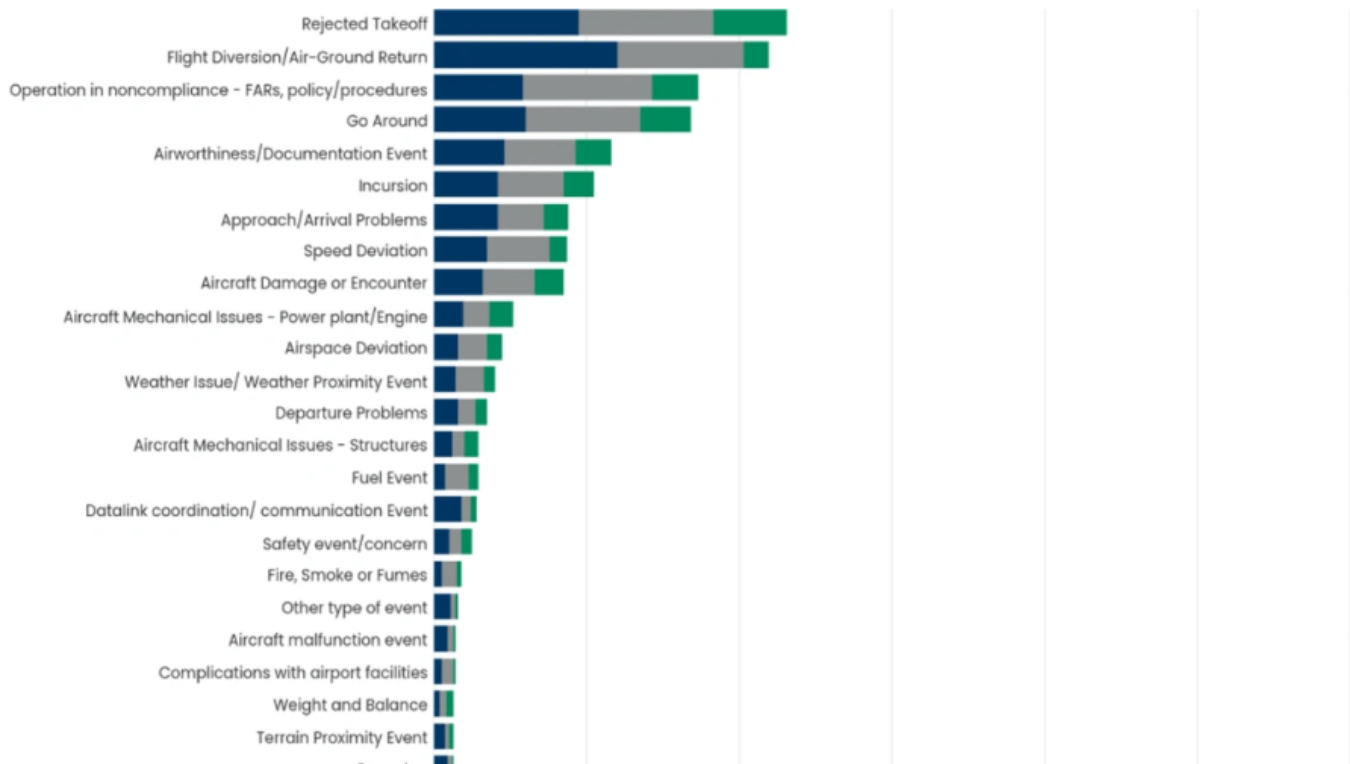
In closing, safety in helicopter operations is rarely the result of one big decision. It is built through hundreds of small decisions made consistently by people who understand that what happens on the ground directly determines what happens in the air. That's why best practices often include safeguards beyond a single individual sign off.

This brings the discussion full circle: are maintainers the "last line of defense," or is true aviation safety forged through a synchronized system of pilots, maintainers, leadership, and procedures, working together like the precision of a K-MAX rotor system to stop failure before the rotors start turning?

Mark Wegle, Senior Manager Flight Services Salt River Project
VAI Board of Directors

ACSF Data Shows Stable Bizav Risk Amid 2026 Pressures - Altitude and course deviation, traffic proximity remain top categories

(Source: Amy Wilder, AIN, September 1, 2026)



© ACSF Report Graphic

A year of regulatory upheaval and geopolitical disruption hasn't shifted the underlying shape of business aviation risk, according to the Air Charter Safety Foundation's (ACSF) [midyear Aviation Safety Action Program \(ASAP\) review](#). This is even as air traffic hit records in 2026, driven by heightened Part 135 activity and a monthlong surge tied to the FIFA World Cup.

Altitude deviation and traffic proximity events, two leading categories every year since 2024, have made up a consistent 30% to 33% of all safety reports for three straight years. According to ACSF, this continuity suggests that operators are absorbing more traffic without a corresponding rise in near midair collisions.

ACSF members submitted 432 ASAP events, totaling 760 reports, in the first half of 2026. Altitude deviation was the top category at 16%, followed by traffic proximity at 14%, concentrated in the New York metro area; Van Nuys, California; and South Florida. Human factors remain a leading root cause, with communications issues, altitude, and course deviations together accounting for a third of submissions.

Traffic proximity events trended downward even as overall traffic climbed, a pattern ACSF called “a genuinely encouraging sign” that airspace management tools are absorbing added volume rather than generating more near collisions.

Coordination and communication issues have also declined since the [Jan. 29, 2025 midair collision](#) between American Airlines Flight 5342 and a U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport—a decline ACSF links to procedural tightening that followed the crash. The NTSB’s investigation produced 74 findings and 50 safety recommendations, laying groundwork for the Airspace Location and Enhanced Risk Transparency ([ALERT](#)) Act now moving through Congress.

ACSF cautioned that the findings have limits. “The data is well-suited to directing attention toward where risk is concentrated, but not yet refined enough to quantify how much actual risk has changed,” the review notes.

In this article

[Air Charter Safety Foundation Company](#)

SAFETY MANAGER'S CORNER

New Feature in PRISM SMS – Export Manager



On Tuesday, September 22nd, an update to PRISM SMS was released, introducing a new feature called Export Manager.

Export Manager is a new tile located on the My Safety Center homepage. This feature allows users to export SMS data from PRISM SMS for individual tools or across all tools. To generate an export, simply select the Export button and choose the data you would like to download. Exported files are provided in CSV format, allowing for easy analysis, filtering, and customization.

Export requests can be submitted at any time and are processed overnight to minimize impact on system performance. Users will receive email notifications when an export request is initiated and again when the export is complete and/or when the status changes.

Because exported data may contain sensitive information, access to Export Manager is restricted to users with the Account Admin permission group. If you have any questions or experience any issues, please contact the support-prismsms@argus.aero team for assistance.

My Safety Center

Click here to Create a hazard / incident report

2. Central florida tower - test

3. CENTENNIAL (KAPA) - Snow piles everywhere

Items per page: 10

1 - 3 of 3

< > >|

My Assignments

Source

3 Selected

Source	Type of assignment	Details	Date ↓
IEP	Checklist assignment	From IS-BAO pro...	10/03/2026
RAT	Workflow Manager Assignment	During rollout,...	09/16/2026
RPT	Workflow Manager Assignment	During rollout,...	09/12/2026
RPT	Workflow Manager Assignment	Small 3 inch ho...	09/08/2026
IEP	Workflow Manager Assignment	2026 Demo	03/12/2026
RAT	Workflow Manager Assignment	Adding new SMS ...	03/12/2026
RAT	Workflow Manager Assignment	Adding new SMS ...	03/12/2026
RAT	Workflow Manager Assignment	New Hangar	03/11/2026

Export Manager

Export

#	Caption	Date and time ↓	Status
1	PRISM SMS Demo Account_AllTools_09242...	09/24/2026 18:14	Pending ...
2	PRISM SMS Demo Account_AllTools_09232...	09/23/2026 16:17	Success ...
3	PRISM SMS Demo Account_AllTools_09232...	09/23/2026 16:14	Success ...
4	PRISM SMS Demo Account_UserData_0923...	09/23/2026 15:27	Success ...
5	PRISM SMS Demo Account_AllTools_09232...	09/23/2026 13:52	Success ...
6	PRISM SMS Demo Account_AllTools_09232...	09/23/2026 13:42	Success ...
7	PRISM SMS Demo Div_AllTools_09232026	09/23/2026 13:38	In-Progress ...
8	PRISM SMS Demo Account_AllTools_09232...	09/23/2026 13:18	Success ...
9	PRISM SMS Demo Account_SelectiveTools...	09/23/2026 02:37	Success ...

Quote of the Month

It is always important... to know what you do not know. Those who think that they know, but are mistaken, and act upon their mistakes, are the most dangerous people to have in charge.

BY: Margaret Thatcher



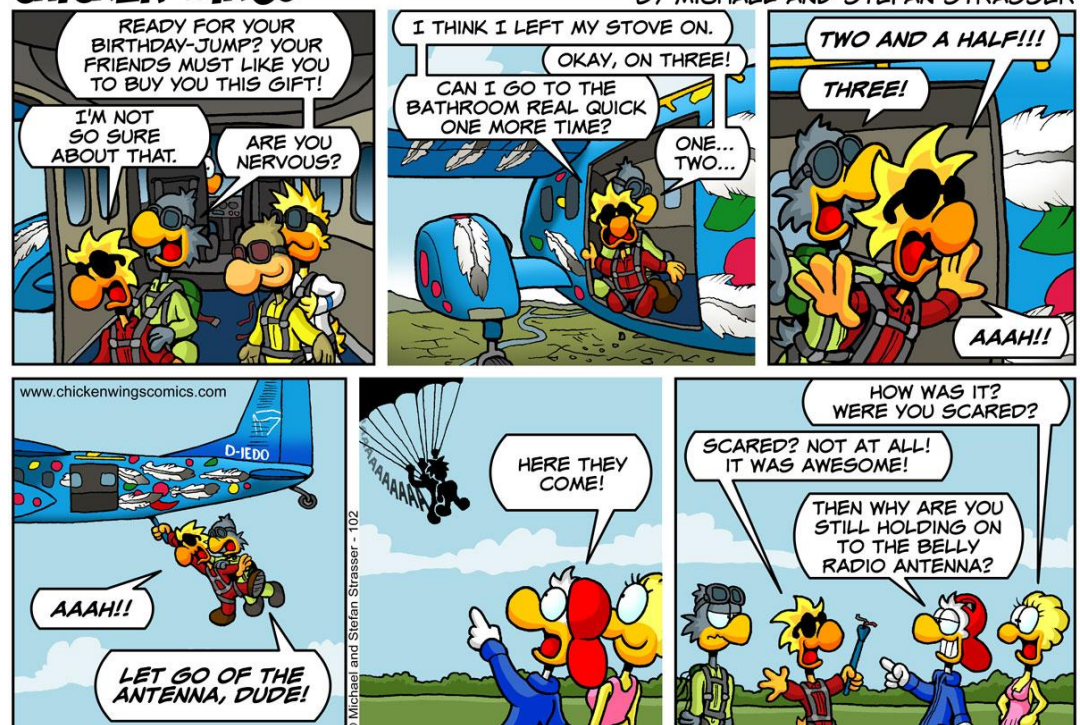
Logical fallacies are simply flaws in reasoning and there are many different types of them. A very common one is called “anecdotal fallacy”, where using a personal experience or an isolated example is taken as truth—instead of using compelling evidence. An example would be the person who believes that smoking is not actually bad for your health because their grandmother smoked and lived to be 95 years old.

The lesson then for people in leadership positions is to objectively challenge their own assumptions so that they can really figure out what they don’t know. Anyone who has ever been in a leadership position has felt the weight of their subordinates expectations—that the leader must have all the answers. What can sometimes get lost is the fact that saying “I don’t know” will often drive sound synergistic reasoning with subordinates and seniors alike — and lead to a better decision.

CHICKEN WINGS

CHICKEN WINGS

BY MICHAEL AND STEFAN STRASSER



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#PRISMPREFERS

UPCOMING COURSES

Oct 22-23, 2026—PROS Course

Recurrent Aviation Auditor Training (RAAT)

Denver, CO

Oct 27-29, 2026—PROS Course

Lead Aviation Auditor Training (LAAT)

Virtual

Nov 16-18, 2026—PROS Course

IOSA Conformance Auditor Training (ICAT)

Virtual

Nov 19-20, 2026 -PRISM

SMS Training Course

Boise, ID

Nov 19-20, 2026—PROS Course

Risk-Based IOSA Training

Virtual

Dec 15-17, 2026—PROS Course

Airline Safety Management System (ASMS)

Virtual

Go to [Upcoming Training Classes](#) to register.

