

Aviation Human Factors Industry News

August 17, 2007

Vol. III. Issue 29

Resolution for National Aviation Maintenance Technician Day One Step Closer to Reality

WASHINGTON, A resolution to create **National Aviation Maintenance Technician Day (H. Res. 444)** passed the **Transportation and Infrastructure Committee** and will go to the House of Representatives for a vote this fall. The resolution will then be considered by the Senate before going to the President.

The resolution, which has the backing of the **Professional Aviation Maintenance Association (PAMA)**, will create a national day to honor and recognize the achievements of the Wright brothers' **first flight mechanic Charles E. Taylor**, and **all certificated aviation maintenance professionals**.

PAMA applauds the work of Rep. Lungren (R-CA), Rep. Filner (D-CA), Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman James L.

Oberstar, and all of the resolution's co-sponsors in helping to get this Resolution on the path to reality.

"Our great thanks go to the dedicated PAMA members and the many others who participated in this effort, including maintenance professionals at American Airlines, the Federal Aviation Administration, Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association, Aviation Maintenance Technician Association, and the AMT Society," Brian Finnegan, PAMA President, said.

Professional Aviation Maintenance Association needs your support for a major initiative to enhance aviation safety by bringing deserved respect and recognition for Charles E. Taylor and all aviation maintenance professionals.

*National Aviation
Maintenance
Technician Day*

May 24



Our goal is for Congress to establish Charles E. Taylor's birthday, May 24, as *National Aviation Maintenance Technician Day* and have that resolution signed into law by President Bush.

Now we need your calls and e-mails to Congress to succeed.

PAMA solicits the aviation community's continued support for National Aviation Maintenance Technician Day and requests everyone continue contacting their representatives in Congress. "We are on the path to passing this resolution," Finnegan said. "We must not relent with our efforts until we have achieved our goal."

US Airways fires baggage workers accused of falsifying OT pay

PHILADELPHIA - US Airways said it has fired more than a dozen baggage handlers at Philadelphia International Airport who have been accused of falsifying overtime records on the airline's computerized timekeeping system.

The employees, whose names were not released, were accused of obtaining managers' computer passwords to get access to the computer system and altering records to make it look as if they had worked overtime when they did not, said Andrea Rader, a US Airways Group Inc. spokeswoman.



"We're in the process of interviewing 100 to 150 people," Rader said. "We fired, at this point, about 15."

Employees intentionally locked themselves out of the system and then used a manager's password to allegedly get back in and falsify records. Rader said the process has been fixed.

Rader said the airline had not ascertained how much it had overpaid employees for false overtime. US Airways found out about the alleged scheme after noticing large amounts of overtime claimed by certain workers in July. The scheme apparently began in May.

The Tempe, Ariz.-based airline is the Philadelphia airport's largest carrier, accounting for more than 60 percent of the traffic.

US Airways said it may seek criminal charges against some employees.

Last year, the airline hired hundreds of baggage handlers to manage increased traffic and high turnover among ramp workers.

US Airways has 1,664 ramp employees at Philadelphia, and managers at the airport say dismissing even 100 or more would not seriously affect baggage handling, Rader said.

For the first six months of 2007, the airline had the worst record for lost and damaged bags among major U.S. airlines, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Experts: Helicopter crews were distracted?

PHOENIX - One or both pilots whose television news helicopters collided and crashed **may have been distracted** by a development in a police pursuit they were covering, aviation safety experts said Friday.

The July 27 accident involving helicopters from stations KTVK and KNXV came moments after a police helicopter pilot reported on a radio that the man being chased by police was changing vehicles, **two aviation accident consultants noted after reviewing a preliminary report on the accident.**

The news pilots **"were probably fixed on that scene and not paying enough attention to where they were,"** said Len Scott, an aviation accident investigator and retired Federal Aviation Administration safety inspector.

The preliminary report issued Friday by the National Transportation Safety Board said there was no visible sign of trouble involving the helicopters before they collided, downing both aircraft and killing all four people aboard.

The preliminary report, which made no conclusions about the cause of the accident, said witnesses on the ground indicated that the KTVK helicopter was relatively stationary and that the KNXV helicopter "was maneuvering when the collision occurred."

Said the report: "There were no reports of erratic movements prior to the collision and no unusual sounds or smoke."



There were five news helicopters covering the pursuit, and a police chopper was also over the chase, but at a lower altitude.

"That's really a hazardous situation," said Ron Schleede, a retired NTSB investigator and manager who also reviewed the preliminary report.

News crews' aerial coverage of police pursuits is usually well organized, according to Larry Grandy, an aviation accident consultant and medical helicopter pilot.

"Then when an event occurs, maybe a collision or the criminal gets out of the vehicle or starts to run, the aircraft start to make turns and orbit," Grandy said.

"Your eyes go to what they want to at the moment, but your discipline (is) supposed to tell you to back to the things that are supposed to keep you out of trouble."

The preliminary report said another pilot told the NTSB the two news helicopters were "positioned a reasonable distance apart" when he first noticed them. The police pilot then broadcast that the motorist being chased was going to steal another truck, and he glanced away for a moment, according to the report. When the pilot who was interviewed looked back, he told the NTSB, the news helicopters were closer together and "shortly thereafter, they impacted."

Deadly danger of distractions

American aviation has never been filled with more regulations, procedures and technology aimed at preventing plane crashes, from laborious passenger security screenings to redundant alarm systems.

Yet Comair Flight 5191 out of Lexington's Blue Grass Airport crashed while taking off in part because of pilot chitchat, investigators said Thursday.

HUMBLING ERROR

The finding is a humbling reminder that human error can short-circuit the most carefully laid safety systems.





It seems indefensibly sloppy and irresponsible for two pilots to banter during the sacrosanct preflight "sterile cockpit" period, when silence is to surround takeoff. A 40-second conversation about job opportunities for other pilots may have contributed to 49 people losing their lives.

Yet distraction has become an accepted component of modern life. We not only tolerate it, we facilitate it with cell phones and Blackberrys. And, for many of us, distractions and interruptions are built into our occupations.

Commercial flight is one of them. Years of task analysis and training have gone into developing "flow" and checklists to guide every aspect of piloting an aircraft. Yet air travel is filled with constant changes, uncertainties and interruptions.

A NASA analysis of National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) accident reports attributed to crew error said half were caused by interruptions and distractions. The report said 34 competing activities distracted the pilots.

Another NASA report focusing on cockpit interruptions acknowledged, "The flight deck is rarely ever sterile and devoid of interruptions."

NOT JUST IN PLANES

The danger of distractions is at least as present on roadways.

A report by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration claims that 80 percent of car accidents are connected to driver distraction.

Reaching for a moving object - shooing a bee, moving aside a helium balloon - make car crashes nine times more likely. Changing a CD reduces driving performance by 18 percent and writing out a list, by 25 percent.

Even when state law prohibits cell-phone use or eating and driving, we take our chances, thinking we can juggle activities "just this once." Most times, we can. But throw in anything unexpected - a tricky stretch of roadway, a change in the pace of traffic, even a complicated conversation - and our brains struggle to manage varied functions well.

NTSB has scrutinized the actions surrounding Comair Flight 5191 and sent recommendations off to the Federal Aviation Administration. Some lessons, such as staying focused on the activity at hand, may be something we can all take to heart.

Pair fight copter charges - Manslaughter too severe for maintenance lapse: lawyers

Two Nelson men who carried out **maintenance work on a helicopter that later crashed** are fighting to have **manslaughter** charges against them dropped.

Skytech Aviation (2003) Ltd owner and managing director John Arthur Horrell, 55, of Nelson, **and licensed aircraft maintenance engineer** Ronald David Potts, 59, of Mapua, **are charged with the manslaughter** of pilot Phillip Devon Heney, from Shenandoah, near Murchison.

Skytech worked on Mr Heney's Robinson R22 helicopter in 2005 and **Potts certified it as fit for service** on August 26 that year.

Later that day, the helicopter spun out of control and crashed when coming in to land on Mr Heney's farm near Murchison.

Mr Heney, **a father of nine, was killed** and passenger Hamish Teddy was seriously injured.

At a pre-trial hearing in the High Court at Nelson on Thursday, lawyers for both accused applied to have the manslaughter charge withdrawn.

Horrell's lawyer, Philip Morgan QC, said because **Horrell was not a licensed engineer, he had contracted Potts, who was licensed, to supervise and certify the work done.**

"He (Potts) did supervise and certify. He just did them badly."

A Civil Aviation Authority investigator previously told the court **how incorrect assembly of the helicopter's aft flexplate coupling was believed to have led to other parts of the tail section failing, causing the crash.**

Mr Morgan said Potts' supervision **should have extended to viewing the flexplate assembly outside of the helicopter's boom, but instead he looked at the equipment through an inspection hole.**

"Somehow Mr Horrell is ending up being criminally responsible for the carelessness of someone who he didn't know was careless."



Crown prosecutor Glen Marshall said Horrell, as director of the company, had a duty to ensure all the work carried out at the hangar was supervised and certified properly by a licensed engineer.

In the month before the crash, the authority had been warned about work and supervision practices at the company and a safety adviser had visited to check that the procedures were understood.

Potts' lawyer, Philip Hall, said his client's "tragic misjudgment" to view the tail rotor assembly through the viewing hole, instead of outside the casing, was simply human error.

"He believed, rightly or wrongly - wrongly as it turned out - that it gave him a sufficient view to ascertain it had been correctly assembled."

Mr Hall said the Crown was "over-charging" Potts and there were other offences that would better "fit the bill". They included a breach of the Civil Aviation Act or criminal nuisance.

He likened Potts' situation to an experienced licensed driver who approached a compulsory stop sign, looked both ways but failed to see "for whatever reason" an oncoming car, which he collided with, killing the other driver.

"That in my view is an inadvertent failure to observe what should have been observed. The driver in that position would never be charged with manslaughter."

Justice John Wild reserved his decision.

Qantas rues more crude repairs

QANTAS has been forced to again defend its maintenance practices after two more sections of emergency lighting wiring in one of its jumbo jets were found to be crudely repaired using staples.

The airline's engineering union contacted the Civil Aviation Safety Authority yesterday and reported that the additional staples and another wiring irregularity had been found over the weekend.



The airline discovered more than two weeks ago that wiring in two of five sections of emergency lighting on the same plane had been repaired by stapling them together.

The emergency lighting is an essential safety feature meant to guide passengers out of the aircraft in the event of a crash at night or if the cabin fills with smoke.

The staples have now been found in four of the five sections but it is unclear who did the stapling.

The Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association believes the staples were used to repair the plane while it underwent heavy maintenance in Singapore, but the Singapore Airlines Engineering Company, which carried out the maintenance, angrily denies this. ALAEA is equally as forceful in its denials that the repair work was done in Australia.

Qantas initially indicated that it had addressed the issue with the Singaporeans but last night said the investigation was still in progress. Qantas head of engineering David Cox said the airline had shortened the frequency of functional tests on the emergency lighting system from the manufacturer's recommended six weeks to two days.

He said the airline was continuing to inspect its aircraft so it could be sure it got everything.

"We're dealing with this as a quality issue, not a safety issue," he said. "So we're working through a rigorous and aggressive program of inspections and follow-up checks so we can be sure."

CASA was also unable to shed any light on who was responsible for the staples but said yesterday it was "comfortable" with the airline's handling of the issue.

CASA spokesman Peter Gibson said the authority had allowed Qantas to continue flying the aircraft with some of the wiring still stapled after the airline agreed to regular checks to ensure the emergency lighting was still working.

Mr Gibson said the stapled wiring was in a 12-volt system and it was not considered a safety of flight issue.

"Qantas has its quality assurance systems in place to check that everything's running properly and when mistakes are made, to identify those and rectify them," he said. "Basically we're satisfied that Qantas is doing that successfully. In other words, there's no reason for us to step in."

JAL to display passenger mementoes of 1985 Flight 123 crash

Bending to the wishes of some bereaved families, Japan Airlines Corp. will display some of the 2,700 personal effects found after the [horrific 1985 crash of JAL Flight 123](#), which left 520 dead and only four survivors.

The jumbo jet crashed on Mount Osutakayama, Gunma Prefecture, at about 6:56 p.m. on Aug. 12, 1985, after its pilots had flown for several hours fighting the aircraft's [total loss of hydraulic control. It was the worst single-aircraft disaster in aviation history.](#)



The mementoes include a broken watch stopped at 6:56 p.m., a pen and a key that both were bent in the impact, pieces of clothing and travel souvenirs.

Kuniko Miyajima, secretary-general of the bereaved families group, said she appreciated the JAL decision.

["We want JAL to design the displays so people will remember the importance of airline safety and the great misery that resulted from the crash."](#) she said.

JAL originally had planned to incinerate all remaining unclaimed articles and encase the ashes in a monument near the mountainside crash site.

However, under protest from the bereaved families, the airline stored the items at one of its facilities.

In April 2006, JAL finally bowed to pressure from the bereaved families and placed on display the [aircraft's failed rear pressure bulkhead, cited as the cause of the crash](#), along with other pieces of the destroyed jet and letters of farewell written by the doomed passengers in the moments before the crash.

The items are at the airline's Safety Promotion Center near Haneda Airport. Anyone wishing to view them must call ahead to the center.

Now JAL plans to add selected personal articles to the display.

About 28,000 people have viewed the exhibit, **about 60 percent being JAL employees undergoing safety training.**

Midnight Shift Nugget

THE RIDE HOME

Driving home after work can be risky for the shift worker, particularly since you have been awake all night and the body needs to sleep. For the evening worker coming home around midnight, the risk of meeting drunk drivers is higher. People think that opening the car windows or listening to the radio will keep them awake. However, studies show that these methods do not work. In fact, **these actions should signal you that you are fatigued and need to pull over immediately.** If you are sleepy when your shift is over, **try to take a nap** before driving home. Remember, **sleep can quickly overcome you** when you don't want it to.



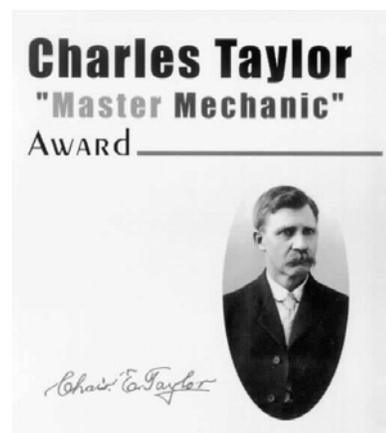
FOLLOW THESE STEPS TO ARRIVE HOME SAFELY:

1. Carpool, if possible. Have the most alert person do the driving.
2. If you are sleepy, stop to nap, but do so in your locked car in a well-lit area.
3. Take public transportation, if possible.
4. Drive defensively.
5. Don't stop off for a "night cap."

Master Mechanics

American Airlines Kansas City Maintenance Base **Adds 6 More Taylor Award Winners.**

The way American Airlines' Kansas City Maintenance Base spouts **Taylor Award** recipients,



one would think the honor is an easy achievement. **Think again.**

Named after Charles E. Taylor, **the mechanic for Wilbur and Orville Wright**, the Master Mechanic Award from the FAA requires the individual to have **served 50 years as an aviation mechanic, including 30 years with FAA certification**. Each recipient must be nominated by three people and exhibit the high standards of knowledge, skill and integrity that Taylor set for the profession.

At a ceremony in May, **six mechanics received** the Taylor Award, boosting Kansas City **total to 20**. Those receiving Taylor Awards in 2007 are Dave Hammond, Jack Morris, Donald Smith, James Steinbrink, Paul Stuber and Ralph Vossler. Vossler is still an active employee. Even in retirement, the ace mechanics remain active in aviation. Two served as maintenance consultants, one owns a small airport and two volunteer in the **“Save a Connie”** effort to restore an historic TWA aircraft.

ATTITUDE AND COMMITMENT Ten Quotes

1. The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire.

Ferdinand Foch, French soldier, military theorist and writer

2. The probability that we may fail in struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just.

Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States

3. The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor.

Vincent Lombardi, NFL Coach



Vince Lombardi, Committed to excellence

4. There are only two options regarding commitment. You're either in or out. There's no such thing as a life in-between.

Pat Riley, NBA Coach

5. To avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing, be nothing.

Elbert Hubbard, American philosopher and writer

6. Our attitudes control our lives. Attitudes are a secret power working twenty-four hours a day, for good or bad. It is of paramount importance that we know how to harness and control this great force.

Tom Blandi, French literary theorist and author

7. Go forward confidently, energetically attacking problems, expecting favorable outcomes.

Norman Vincent Peale, Preacher and author

8. A healthy attitude is contagious but don't wait to catch it from others.

Anonymous

9. A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties.

Harry Truman, 33rd President of the United States

10. A positive attitude may not solve all your problems, but it will annoy enough people to make it worth the effort.

Picture This

When you wander the information highway, you may run into the odd image that prompts the question: "How'd s/he do that?" Perhaps this person was **distracted**. Perhaps his or her **mind was on the electric bill** and **whether the dental plan** might cover the kids' braces. Maybe he or she was just simply **tired**. Or maybe this worker had just had an **argument** with the boss about concentrating on the task at hand; or rather, at knee.

