



AIRWARD NEWS

In Recognition of Professional Performance during a Hazardous Aviation Event or Significant Contribution to Aviation Mishap Prevention

If You See Something, Say Something

Eric Lathrop, Ramp Manager at the Fort Huachuca Airtanker Base demonstrated a commitment to safety by following the adage “if you see something, say something”. On July 2, 2009 he was marshalling a large airtanker and noticed a screw in the nose wheel of the aircraft. Eric stopped the aircraft, and pointed the screw out to the crew chief. His actions may have prevented a flat tire or more serious consequences upon subsequent landings. The pilot of the airtanker recommended Eric for the Airward for his observation and focus as well as his willingness to speak up and take action. Good job, Eric!



Eric Lathrop (left) receiving Airward from Alex Stone

Airmanship and Honesty Step Forward

When faced with engine trouble on take-off to the Taylor Fire, Skip Alderson reacted immediately by jettisoning the retardant load rather than try to troubleshoot the engine. His response was quick and proper in dealing with the engine problem, and demonstrates the kind of airmanship we value in the aviation program.

He had realized afterward that while he was waiting for the taxi way to clear he had adjusted his left engine so it was running lean to keep the engine from loading up. When the tower cleared him for takeoff he failed to readjust the mixture on the left engine. This is a testament to his dedication to increasing the safety culture of our aviation program. It is easy to lose focus of the basics in our dynamic operational environment.

We commend Skip for his honesty, sharing his lesson and his commitment to safety. (SAFECOM 09-0662)



Skip Alderson

Monumental Effort

Throughout the 2009 fire season, Monument Helitack Crew found and addressed several different rappel equipment irregularities. It is obvious that leadership stressed the importance of equipment inspections and that the crew was vigilant during the process.

The first defect found by the crew was a 3/8 inch crack in the cover of a Sky Genie descent device. Appropriately, they contacted the Missoula Technology and Development Center (MTDC) Rappel Equipment Specialist as well as the Region 2 Helicopter Operations Specialist (HOS) and submitted a SAFECOM.

The potential for another similarly cracked cover to damage a rope was considered significant enough that National Aviation Safety Specialists generated National Safety Alert IA 09-03. As a result of the information sharing that followed Monument's initial report, additional cracks and other cover defects were discovered by rappel users at other bases. The manufacturer was notified of the problem, and all of the defective covers were subsequently removed from service and replaced.

In a separate rappel equipment issue, during inspections of recently purchased rappel ropes, a Monument spotter found knots, cut strands, and nylon fiber bundles that had strands perpendicular to other fibers in the bundle. Again, MTDC and the Region 2 HOS were notified, and a SAFECOM was submitted. Further investigation determined that this particular rope had been manufactured using an improper splicing technique.

The information sharing that followed this initial discovery led to rappel users at other bases finding similar knotted splices in a small number of ropes. These ropes were removed from service and replaced by the manufacturer.

The Monument Helitack crew are commended for their dedication to aviation safety. The crew's exceptional attention to detail during the equipment inspection process has reinforced how important it is for rappellers to carefully inspect new rappel equipment for defects before it is put into service. ([SAFECOM 09-387](#), [SAFECOM 09-323](#) and [SAFECOM 09-210](#))



Left to right: Josh Hanson, Corinne LaBella, Kris Paxson, Jeffrey Jones, Casey Quinn, Lisa Gowe, Tom Barter. Not Present: Adam Kahler, Joey Fansler, Ben Adolphson, Patrick Peak, Seth Carvill

Dip Site Manager Makes All the Difference

On July 17th Kari Hershberger was asked to provide dip-site management and oversight at a remote location on the Backbone fire. Prior to leaving the heli-base Kari asked the right questions; what's my assignment, who am I working for, and what is the current situation? When Kari got to the remote location she recognized some additional complexities and worked with personnel at the site to facilitate improvements and reduce unnecessary risk.

While Kari was assisting with crash rescue duties a tanked Sikorsky SH-3H helicopter had an accident at the dip-site. Kari immediately provided scene safety for personnel at the site, used the chain of command to properly relay critical accident information and updates, and provided initial assistance to the helicopter pilots. Kari continued to direct incoming resources and provided leadership until line staff arrived on scene.

The actions coordinated by Kari demonstrated the importance of understanding the responsibilities of a Dip-site Manager; acting decisively and communicating clearly to protect life and property. Through Kari's direction, resting firefighters were moved away from the dip area prior to the accident which undoubtedly saved lives. Kari's actions and assistance made the dip-site operation safer for helicopters, ground personnel and equipment operators.

Kari's situational awareness; actions, training, dedication, professionalism and personal leadership, made the difference before and after the accident. Great Job Kari, Thanks!



Gary Sterling (left) presenting Airward to Kari Hershberger (right)

Good Eyes Guys

Chris Holm and Wayne Dahlen, airtanker pilots for Neptune Aviation are commended for their great situational awareness and quickness to alert a Leadplane of a potential airspace conflict. On the Taylor Fire last August, the leadplane was on the base leg to perform a retardant drop when a helitanker had deviated from the expected flight path. Chris and Wayne noticed the helitanker

and immediately notified the leadplane of the helitanker in his flight path. The leadplane pilot was focused on the drop area looking out the right front and side window and did not observe the helitanker. Nice job guys of making the quick notification and preventing a potential accident. Thanks!



Chris Holm

Wayne Dahlen

[SAFECOM 09-0663](mailto:SAFECOM@09-0663)

Exceptional Airmanship

Joe Sanella and Dolan McDonald were both recognized this spring for their exceptional airmanship from events that occurred late last year.

On November 30th, 2009, the pitch controls in the King Air Joe was flying delayed prior to responding to the pitch trim control inputs. This delay caused an uncommanded and aggressive control input. Joe took the appropriate action by immediately disabling the autopilot system and recovering the airplane. Joe's knowledge of aircraft systems, judgment, and piloting skills enabled him, with his plane full of passengers, to continue safely and land at your destination without incident. Maintenance personnel did not find anything wrong with the aircraft, the aircraft was flown back to Missoula and the problem could not be duplicated. [SAFECOM 10-0061](#)



Joe Sanella left receiving Airward from Patti Koppenol



Dolan McDonald left receiving Airward from Patti Koppenol

Then just a few days later, on December 2nd, 2009, Dolan McDonald was transporting passengers in the same aircraft when he experienced the same problem as Joe. He took the appropriate action by immediately disabling the autopilot system and recovering the airplane. He returned to the departure airport and the maintenance shop was unable to find any defects. Knowing that Joe had also experienced this same problem, Dolan was adamant that something was wrong and put the aircraft out of service. Dolan's knowledge of aircraft systems, judgment, and piloting skills enabled him to safely land the plane full of passengers.

Maintenance personnel later found the airplane to have a malfunctioning pitch servo which was replaced. [SAFECOM 10-0059](#)

Stand Down to Catch Up

On November 19, 2009, Sarah Creachbaum, Superintendent of Haleakala National Park, issued a memorandum to all Park employees notifying them that an aviation safety stand down for all helicopter operations was in effect.

In the memorandum, Sarah Creachbaum stated that the reason for the stand down was that Haleakala National Park did not have an approved Aviation Management Plan, required by National Park Service policy (D.O. 60, 4.1).

Sarah Creachbaum was very clear in that her decision to implement the stand down “is in no way a reflection on the excellent work of Haleakala employees and contractors who have been managing an exceptional park aviation program. Their attention to safety and to the protection of park resources is to be commended.” The aviation management plan is a “key element in ensuring that park helicopter operations are conducted in the safest manner possible with the appropriate contingencies, risk assessments and environmental analysis in place. Our employees, and the outstanding resources of this park, deserve nothing less.”

Haleakala employees, under the leadership of Timmy Bailey and with the assistance of the National Park Service National Office and the National Interagency Fire Center, worked hard to draft an aviation management plan for Haleakala. With the aviation plan approved, park helicopter operations will resume in accordance with its terms and conditions

By implementing a safety stand down, the employees at Haleakala National Park have set the standard by embracing the principles of aviation safety and are truly deserving of the Department of Interior Airward.

Congratulations on a job well done:

From left to right:
Ted Rodrigues
Timmy Bailey
Terry Lind

Not pictured:
Sarah Creachbaum
Steve Anderson
Bruce Applin
Cathleen Bailey
Perry Bednorz
Peter Fitzpatrick
Jeremy Gooding
Liz Gordon
Peter Kafka
Mark Rentz



How to Make a Not-So-Normal Landing Look Easy

While conducting a fire reconnaissance flight on July 25, 2009 Mikel Hardy, the pilot-in-command of N999GB, an Aero Commander, with Ponderosa Aviation, experienced a total loss of hydraulic pressure when the O-ring in the left auxiliary gear retraction cylinder failed. The O-ring failure allowed a significant loss of hydraulic fluid and the subsequent loss of hydraulic pressure.

Mikel immediately terminated the mission and returned to the Cedar City Air Tanker Base to make an emergency landing. The loss of hydraulic fluid/pressure forced Mikel to use the emergency back-up nitrogen bottle to deploy (extend) the landing gear. Mikel, using great crew resource management (CRM), instructed the Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS) to activate the hydraulic reserve system as the airplane crossed the runway threshold.



John Burke (left) presenting AirWard to Mikel

As a result of Mikel's training and his calm approach to handling this in-flight emergency he was able to make an otherwise uneventful "*no-flap, no-hydraulics*" landing. In fact, if you simply watched the aircraft land and taxi in you would have had no idea that an emergency had just been quietly resolved. Mikel's initial identification of the emergency, his quick and correct response, and his excellent airmanship and use of the other crew member took what otherwise could have been a badly damaged aircraft (or worse) and turned it into a great example of professional airmanship. Great job Mikel for taking a conservative approach to an in-flight emergency.

They Tower Above.....



Eddie Morris (right) presenting AirWard to (from left to right) Marc Gosik, Bruce Hoyer, and Bruce Wyres. Not pictured: Richard Brown and Richard Young

On June 19 and 20, 2010, the Coconino NF responded to two large fires in less than 24 hours. The first fire was assigned to a Type 2 Incident Command Team (ICT) and the second fire a Type 1 ICT. By late afternoon on June 20, a mix of firefighting aircraft including 8 Large Airtankers, 12 light fixed wing and 10 rotary wing aircraft were operating from, or within the vicinity of, the Flagstaff Airport with both fires in sight of the Flagstaff Tower. The Air Traffic Controllers sequenced firefighting aircraft in with the normal commercial and general aviation traffic, giving priority to firefighting aircraft when needed. The assistance and cooperation provided by the Controllers was invaluable to the safety and success of the firefighting effort. Thanks to all the controllers at the Flagstaff Tower for assisting us in safe and efficient operations, you're awesome!

Risk Management at it's Best

During operations on the Schultz Fire, Coconino NF, one of the mechanics on HT-716 discovered a red BIM (Blade Inspection Method) indicator on one of the main rotor blades. For hollow, non-composite helicopter blades, nitrogen pressurization of the interior and leak checks on the blade body or spar are critical maintenance procedures. Each blade has an indicator called a BIM, which both allows nitrogen into the hollow blade and monitors nitrogen levels with a “pass/fail” indication. BIM indicators ensure sufficient nitrogen levels in blades. Low levels may indicate a crack in a blade spar, which could cause rotor failure and crash. When faced with the alternative to conduct a maintenance “run-up” on the ramp at the Flagstaff Airport, the Pilot, Crew Chief, and Helicopter Manager agreed not to run the helicopter due to the risk of blade damage/loss and possible injury or damage to surrounding aircraft and personnel. For conducting a joint risk assessment and making the decision not to test run the aircraft, the crew was presented Airwards by Jami Anzalone, R3 Regional Aviation Safety Manager. ([SAFECOM 10-0347](#))



From left to right: HT-716 Crew Chief, John Harbrige, Pilot in Command Dave Owen, and Helicopter Manager Rocco Terracciano. Not Pictured: Mechanic Brian Aasen and Pilot in Command Mike Gilpin.



Aviation Safety Offices



http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/av_safety/ - <http://amd.nbc.gov/safety/>