

FEBRUARY 2025



AERO CREW NEWS®

Y o u r I n d u s t r y C o n n e c t i o n



AERO CREW NEWS 2025 PHOTO CONTEST IS NOW LIVE!



2021 Photo Contest entry pictured // Photo credit: James B.

The theme for this year is **Rarely Seen Airlines**



Enter for your chance to win top-tier prizes!



Entries will be accepted between January 1, 2025 and February 28, 2025.

Public vote will be held between March 15, 2025 and April 15, 2025.

[Learn More](#)

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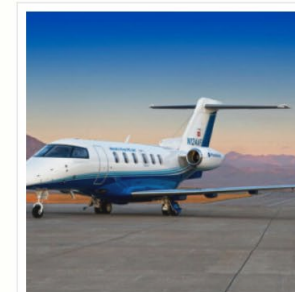


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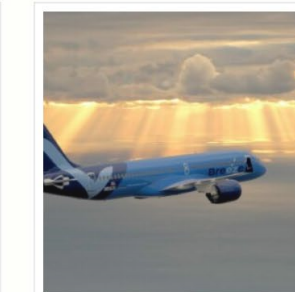
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The Grid (contract comparisons, pay charts, company details, etc.) has moved online. Click on the airlines above to go directly to that airline's information, or go to www.AeroCrewNews.com/go/thegrid.



Dear readers,

The Aero Crew team is deeply saddened by the events of this week on the Potomac River. Our sincerest condolences to the families, loved ones, friends and colleagues who are affected by this tragic loss.

The photo contest has now been live for 31 days and we have received 60 photos. Unfortunately, five of these did not satisfy the theme, RARELY SEEN AIRLINES, so we had to eliminate them from the competition. The good news is that there is still time to capture more pictures of *rarely seen airlines* and submit them for great prizes. Submit your entry [here](#). Scroll through your photos, too. You may have forgotten about something you snapped years ago.

Speaking of the photo contest, we did have a last-minute prize contribution from Method Seven that contributed a pair Altitude FLT18 eyewear as a prize for the first runner-up. Be sure to check out their website and look at their aviation sunglasses.

I met with the Method Seven team at EAA's Air Venture in Oshkosh last summer and purchased a pair of their Ascent eyewear for sun. Recently they sent me the Altitude FLT18 to put through a test run. Check out my review comparing these two products [here](#).

Additionally, we are very excited to welcome a renowned astronomer with a new column called SkyWatch. Howard Parkin will help us learn what we are seeing as we travel through the night skies marveling at the beauty of the stars from altitude. SkyWatch will publish quarterly providing us seasonal updates to our views.

Remember to keep your cameras ready! One lucky grand-prize winner will be the recipient of a brand-new Bose A30 Aviation headset plus prizes from Travelpro and a copy of *Airline Transition Manual*. For runners-up, there are more great prizes for great photos. Don't miss the opportunity.

Fly Safe,

Craig D. Pieper

Craig D. Pieper



About the Publisher ✈️

Craig Pieper is the Publisher and Founder of Aero Crew News. Craig obtained his Bachelors of Science in Aeronautical Science, along with a minor in Aviation Weather, from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in 2001. Craig is also a captain for a major airline with a type rating in the Boeing 737 & Embraer 145 and has logged over 8,000 hours of flying time since his introductory flight on November 14th, 1992.

January 2025

What you may have missed in January

Feature – The anticipated Aero Crew News Photo Contest for 2025 kicked off.

Baggage – Find top tips for making 2025 a better year for work happiness.

Business Vector – Gain insights into how to best negotiate for higher compensation.

Coffee & Pretzels – Dude?

Fitness – Your resolutions/goals can bring you the results your desire if you play it smart.

Grey Matter – You're not alone if you've ever asked if training gets any easier.

Money – Beyond money, investments can be made into what really matters—time and health.

Moonlight – This new column for 2025 kicked off with a very tasty morsel—the Aviation Cookie Company.

Mortgage – Get an idea of what 2025 mortgage rates will look like.

Perspectives – Look back to appreciate where you've been, then look ahead into what this new year can mean to your career.

SkyLaw – This column is resurrected to address the detrimental impact of the VA and FAA's cooperation.



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AFA Statement on American Eagle Flight 5342

Association of Flight Attendants-CWA President Sara Nelson, representing 55,000 Flight Attendants at 20 airlines including PSA, released the following statement: “Our union is responding to the tragic midair collision of PSA Flight 5342 with a military helicopter. Two AFA Flight Attendants were crewing the flight... [Read More](#)



United Airlines Achieves Record Fourth Quarter Profit Well Ahead Of Expectations; Reiterates Path To Double-Digit Pre-Tax Margin

United Airlines (UAL) reported full-year and fourth-quarter 2024 financial results. The company had full-year pre-tax earnings of \$4.2 billion, with a pre-tax margin of 7.3%; adjusted pre-tax earnings... [Read More](#)



ALPA Vows to Continue to Fight as EASA Attempts Steps That Could Allow for Single-Pilot Operations in Europe

Capt. Jason Ambrosi, president of the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA), issued the following statement today in response to the European Union Aviation Safety Agency's (EASA) revised... [Read More](#)



Delta Air Lines Announces December Quarter and Full Year 2024 Financial Results

Delta Air Lines reported financial results for the December quarter and full year 2024 and provided its outlook for the March quarter and full year 2025. [Read More](#)



Horizon Air Flight Attendants File for Federal Mediation, Push Forward in Fight for Fair Contract

Flight Attendants at Horizon Air, represented by the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA), are ramping up their fight for a fair contract by filing for federal mediation. [Read More](#)



Southwest Airlines Reports Fourth Quarter And Full Year 2024 Results

Southwest Airlines Co. (NYSE: LUV) (the “Company”) today reported its fourth quarter and full year 2024 financial results. [Read More](#)



JetBlue Pilots Respond to Earnings Report with a Call for a Fair Contract

The JetBlue Airways pilots, represented by the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA), responded to JetBlue's fourth-quarter earnings and outlook for 2025 with a call for management to come to the negotiating table... [Read More](#)



American Airlines reports fourth-quarter and full-year 2024 financial results

American Airlines Group Inc. (NASDAQ: AAL) reported its fourth-quarter and full-year 2024 financial results, including: Record fourth-quarter revenue of \$13.7 billion and record full-year revenue of \$54.2 billion... [Read More](#)



JetBlue Announces Fourth Quarter 2024 Results

JetBlue Airways Corporation (NASDAQ: JBLU) today reported its financial results for the fourth quarter of 2024. "2024 was a year of rapid change for JetBlue as we introduced our refocused strategy, JetForward, setting us on a path to get back to profitability"... [Read More](#)



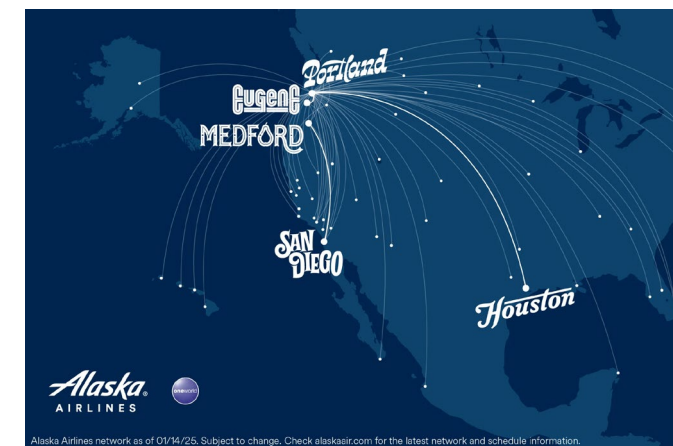
American Airlines hits a home run with spring flight options across Arizona and Florida

With less than a month until pitchers and catchers report for training, American Airlines is offering baseball fans numerous options to get up close to their favorite players in sunny Arizona and Florida. [Read More](#)



Boeing Reports Fourth Quarter Results

The Boeing Company recorded fourth quarter revenue of \$15.2 billion, GAAP loss per share of (\$5.46) and core loss per share (non-GAAP)* of (\$5.90)... [Read More](#)



Attention Oregonians! Alaska Airlines announces three new nonstops around the state

For the first time, we'll fly daily between Portland and Houston starting this spring. We're adding two daily Portland-Eugene roundtrips for convenient travel. We're linking two sunny destinations with new Medford-San Diego route. [Read More](#)

Why Am I Running?

The morning after PSA 5342 and PAT 25 Accident

WRITTEN BY: ANDREW ROSS (GREY MATTER COLUMNIST)



The news came swiftly, as it often does in aviation circles, at around 10:00 PM on Wednesday night. It's usually rumor, or an instance wildly blown out of proportion, or simply a case of misunderstanding.

This, as we know, was not one of those times.

It's hard to express the anxiety, sadness, and anger at watching what unfolded over the Potomac. It seemed to happen in slow motion, and I wanted to yell at my phone for the crews to do something to avoid the future that was now past. It wasn't any easier to watch the video the more times it played; the heartbreak only grew.

I woke up that next morning to the usual outpouring of support from colleagues, loved ones, friends, and family. "Yes, it is a tragedy." "No, I'm at home." "No, I don't believe I knew anyone involved." Understandable concern by all, and I knew somewhere texts just like mine weren't being returned.

I went downstairs to take care of the dog and finish my taxes. I had multiple news feeds going on my computer and would check back

for updates regularly. I prayed for a survivor to be found somewhere, anywhere, but mostly found myself giving thanks that families would be able to lay a loved one to rest giving closure which sometimes is not the case in such tragedies.

Then, I was struck by the odd sensation of needing to go for a run.

This isn't completely unusual, I usually like to run three or four times a week, but it is odd that I felt so compelled, at that moment, to run.

Twenty minutes later, I found myself on a treadmill staring at a bank of TV screens each tuned to a news channels. Thankfully, the run wasn't intended to be a distraction, but I watched as the news channels did their thing—bringing on guests to do their best to make sense of the tragedy.

Why did this happen? When will we learn? What will we learn? As the world asks these questions, I had one of my own—why am I running? I should be pouring over news feeds, checking in with friends, reassuring nervous

flyers that while this is tragic, the system is still robust and safe. And yet, here I was, on this treadmill.

I reflected on the odd feeling of needing to run and settled on a few facts:

I am running because this morning I am blessed to be able to do so.

I am running because of those who can't run any longer.

I am running because somewhere, someone is frozen to their bed in grief.

I am running for my friends and colleagues who know someone involved.

I am running for my friends and colleagues who didn't yet grieve.

I am running for the air traffic controllers, technicians, ramp agents, gate agents, food service providers, ticket counter agents, airport operations workers, and all aviation employees who work in harmony to create the safest chain of aviation safety in the world.

I am running for those horrible times, when the chain breaks.

But mostly, I am running because running is a forward movement, and in instances where forward movement seems impossible, that is when it is most critical.

I am moving forward by making sure that I can do the best job possible for my link in the chain.

I am moving forward by honoring the victims by taking the extra time to brief the crew before, during, and after a flight.

I am moving forward by remembering that vigilance is always required in this line of work.

I am moving forward, because the only way to make ourselves, our industry, our world, better is to keep moving forward.



About the Author ✈

Andrew Ross is a pilot at a major airline flying the Boeing 787, previously the Boeing 757 and 767 domestically and internationally, and prior to that flew the Embraer 145. [Read More..](#)

Hypoxia: An Insidious Threat to Flight Safety

WRITTEN BY: SERGIO SOVERO

Hypoxia, a condition characterized by insufficient oxygen reaching the tissues, is one of the most critical aeromedical factors in aviation. It poses a significant threat to flight safety, particularly in high-altitude environments where the reduced atmospheric pressure can drastically lower oxygen availability. Pilots must understand the causes, recognize the symptoms, and discern mitigation strategies associated with hypoxia to protect both themselves and their passengers during flight.

At sea level, the atmosphere provides an adequate partial pressure of oxygen, allowing the body to function normally. However, as altitude increases, the atmospheric pressure decreases, which in turn reduces the partial pressure of oxygen. This reduction compromises the body's

ability to absorb sufficient oxygen into the bloodstream, particularly above 10,000 feet. While commercial aircraft are equipped with pressurized cabins to maintain safe oxygen levels, hypoxia remains a concern in unpressurized aircraft or in situations where pressurization systems fail.

Hypoxia manifests in several forms, with hypoxic hypoxia being the most relevant to aviation. This type occurs when there is insufficient oxygen in the air for effective gas exchange in the lungs, a scenario common at high altitudes. Other forms, such as hypemic hypoxia (caused by conditions like anemia or carbon monoxide poisoning) and stagnant hypoxia (resulting from impaired blood circulation), may also affect pilots but arise

from different underlying issues. The symptoms of hypoxia are insidious, making it particularly dangerous for pilots. Early signs include dizziness, fatigue, headache, and a sense of euphoria or overconfidence. These symptoms can progress to more severe effects such as impaired judgment, confusion, loss of coordination, and even unconsciousness if corrective action is not taken promptly. The subtle and subjective nature of these symptoms often prevents pilots from recognizing them in time, which can have severe consequences.

The severity of hypoxia depends on altitude, duration of exposure, and individual susceptibility. For instance, at altitudes of 12,000 to 15,000 feet, symptoms typically develop slowly and may initially go unnoticed. However, at higher altitudes, the onset of hypoxia can occur within minutes or even seconds, particularly during rapid decompression events. This phenomenon, known as the “time of useful consciousness,” refers to the short window in which a pilot

can make effective decisions before cognitive impairment sets in.

Preventing and mitigating hypoxia in aviation requires a combination of technical measures, training, and personal awareness. In pressurized aircraft, cabin pressurization systems are the primary defense against hypoxia, maintaining oxygen levels equivalent to those at lower altitudes. However, pilots must remain prepared for potential system failures by using supplemental oxygen systems when necessary. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations mandate the use of supplemental oxygen at altitudes above 12,500 feet for extended periods, with stricter requirements at higher altitudes.

Training is an essential component of hypoxia prevention. Many pilots undergo altitude chamber training, which exposes them to hypoxic conditions in a controlled environment. This training allows them to recognize their personal symptoms of hypoxia, which can vary significantly among individuals.

Familiarity with these symptoms enhances a pilot's ability to respond swiftly and effectively in real-world scenarios.

In addition to technical measures and training, maintaining overall health is crucial for reducing susceptibility to hypoxia. Factors such as smoking, alcohol consumption, dehydration, and poor physical fitness can exacerbate the effects of hypoxia. Pilots must prioritize their health and avoid substances or behaviors that compromise their oxygen-carrying capacity.

The role of hypoxia in aviation incidents underscores its potential danger. Historical accidents attributed to hypoxia, such as the 1999 Learjet 35 crash that claimed the life of professional golfer Payne Stewart and five others, highlight the devastating consequences of unrecognized or unmitigated

hypoxia. Such incidents serve as reminders of the importance of vigilance and preparedness.

In conclusion, hypoxia is a significant aeromedical challenge in aviation that demands constant attention and proactive measures. By understanding its causes, recognizing its symptoms, and implementing effective prevention strategies, pilots can safeguard their performance and ensure the safety of their flights. Advances in technology, coupled with ongoing training and awareness, continue to enhance the aviation community's ability to address this critical issue, ultimately contributing to safer skies.



About the Author

Sergio Sovero was born and raised in Lima, Peru, and is currently a captain for Delta Air Lines. [Read More...](#)



Photography provided by Method Seven

Method Seven—Noise Cancelling for Your Eyes

A comparison of two pairs of sunglasses eyewear! (Please don't call them sunglasses!)

WRITTEN BY: CRAIG PIEPER

Last year at EAA's Air Venture in Oshkosh, I met with the Method Seven eyewear team. Method Seven is a small company based in Santa Cruz, Calif. dedicated to redefining the eyewear experience. "Please don't call them sunglasses" is part of their mission statement.

"Method Seven believes in purposeful performance eyewear, designed to create a harmonious equilibrium between what's outside your eyes and inside your brain."

My experience with my new eyewear has been just that. While at AirVenture I tried on several different types of aviation eyewear. I liked the way the Ascent fit my face. One nice aspect of this brand of eyewear is the ability to pick your level of visible light transmission, or VLT. The Ascent eyewear has four options of lenses and three levels of VLT: 9%, 2x 18% (blue or gray lens) and 30%. They also offer a 24% VLT for three types of prescription, bifocal, progressive and single vision. Check out the full [Ascent line here](#).





Ascent Sky18

I went with the SKY18 (at 18%) because my eyes are sensitive to light, and I need light cancelation in all types of light conditions. I don my eyewear even when it's cloudy, mainly so I don't struggle searching for my eyewear as we are popping out the top of the cloud layer. Truth is, everyone needs UV protection even when it is cloudy.

Method Seven recently sent me the [Interceptor MACH15](#) to review. I've never been a huge fan of plastic-framed eyewear, especially with a sticker price over a hundred dollars, but I gave the Interceptor a fair trial. The lightness



Interceptor Mach15

of this pair of eyewear was a little shocking because I'm used to metal-frame eyewear with some weight to them, but after wearing them for hours in flight, I almost forgot they were there. The extra thin temple made sure the noise cancelation from my Bose A30 headset was not compromised. Compared with other sunglasses that I have used in the past, I noticed a distinguishable decrease in background noise wearing the Interceptor, which I consider a huge plus. The MACH15 has a 15% VLT, which is just slightly darker than my Ascent SKY18.



Ascent Sky18 out of the box
Photo credit: Craig Pieper



Interceptor Mach15 out of the box
Photo credit: Craig Pieper

Method Seven offers the Interceptor with the classic black frame and a limited 1Moment edition with a translucent orange frame. The 1Moment edition was inspired by Sport Air Racer, Andrew Findlay. The Interceptor has several lens options from 18% VLT to Rx 24% VLT. Check out [the full selection here](#).

Method Seven has four additional pilot-style eyewear: [The Aviatrix](#), [The Patriot](#), [The Altitude](#) and [The Pilot Rx+](#) is their prescription-lens line that can be matched with a variety of frame styles.

If you are a prescription lens wearer, don't miss the [clip-on options](#), too.

All their pilot eyewear are non-polarized, which as we all know, are a must when flying aircraft! If I had a nickel for every time I had to explain to a salesperson why I need non-polarized sunglasses, I'd have at least a dollar! Let's face it, don't we buy sunglasses about once a year?

Method Seven also offers eyewear for horticulturists, trail runners and everyday life! Be sure to see their [full selection of eyewear here](#). Once you select a lifestyle, their site will recall your selection for the next time you visit their site. You'll have to scroll down to the footer to select a new style under the Experience heading.

If you haven't given Method Seven a chance, be sure to look for them at AOPA Fly In, Sun 'n Fun, AirVenture, Greater Alaska and Las Cruces Air Races.

Method Seven Event Schedule

AOPA Fly In	Confirmed	2/14-16	https://www.aopa.org/community/buckeye-air-fair
Sun 'n Fun	Confirmed	4/1-6	https://flsynf.org/
AirVenture	Confirmed	7/21-27	https://www.eaa.org/ea
Greater Alaska	Tentative	6/3-4	https://alaskaairmen.org/greatgathering/
Las Cruces Air Races	Tentative	TBD	https://www.sportclass.com/





Editorial photo credit: Ceri Breeze // Shutterstock.com

What I'm Learning from Teaching Flight Instructors

WRITTEN BY: JOHN McDERMOTT

I recently started my first course of training with a new Certified Flight Instructor (CFI) applicant and have been reminded of all there is to know as an instructor. I did my initial CFI training in 2023 and have been out teaching in the field for some time now, and I am looking forward to another opportunity to review all the information I first compiled so long ago.

Much of the information hasn't escaped me, of course; it's not like I need a complete refresh of everything there is to know. But

looking over traditional concepts I use daily with a more detailed lens (not only at the instructional level but at the level of providing instruction to an instructor) should provide refreshment that proves beneficial to my teaching across the board.

Of particular importance are the Fundamentals of Instruction (FOI). Looking back on the FOIs helps me appreciate the value of refreshing these critical concepts. It is never too early nor too late to ensure your teaching and

perspectives are aligned in a way that allows for effective communication and teaching. Hearing lesson plans on well-known topics from a new perspective also opens me up to new ways of considering and conveying. When instructors view something from a new vantagepoint, their students will ultimately benefit from the added perspective. This new perspective and the questions my instructor-applicant may ask me will challenge me to expand my understanding of concepts in unique ways that I didn't always see with initial student pilots; this isn't to say that student pilot questions don't achieve the same purpose, because they do—but hearing questions from someone with a higher base level of knowledge brings a unique thought process that adds value.

Aside from helping me refresh my knowledge, teaching new instructor-applicants is incredibly helpful with my interpersonal relationships at work. I need to challenge myself to approach in-depth concepts in a manner that allows for effective communication. A certain amount of growth is always required in new situations, and given internal reflection and attention, that growth can help me as an instructor in a variety of ways.

By focusing in-depth on FAA source material, I can develop new ways to communicate critical information to a variety of students. I will develop ways to work critical information into lessons and briefings with students at every level and in every stage of their training.

Over my time instructing, I have gotten into a certain rhythm when it comes to teaching. I have information I like to focus on, certain methods I prefer, and specific ways to attack a given problem. Getting back to the basics of instructing helps me refresh information I need to know and will also give me the opportunity to expand the tactics and information I use to teach which makes my students and me safer day after day.

Flight instructors have an incredible standard on initial checkrides, and helping a pilot reach that consistently is a unique challenge that demands attention and focus. For me, the good thing is that attention and focus will help me prepare to teach all my students, not just this flight-instructor applicant. With the amount of information that flight instructors are expected to retain and apply on a daily basis, new opportunities to review and refresh are always welcome.

I am excited to embark on this new journey and to work with other instructors at my flight school to complete the required training and help this student achieve his certificate. I am excited for everything I will learn and gain from teaching another teacher, and I'm looking forward to seeing how my own teaching will improve as a result.

About the Author



John McDermott's passion for aviation began in a Michigan bookstore when he found a story about a chance encounter between enemy pilots during World War II. Soon, after watching countless hours of fighter jets and traffic from his home near O'Hare International Airport, he was hooked forever. [Read More...](#)

A Night-Sky Watcher's Guide for the Flight Deck

WRITTEN BY: HOWARD PARKIN MBE BSC, BED, FRAS

Editor's Note

This month and quarterly into the future, we welcome renowned British astronomer Howard Parkin to our pages. Howard will educate us on what we are seeing in the night sky as we redeye. You'll find interesting facts, amazing observations and exciting information that will be fun to share with the children in your life too. Howard, who lives on the Isle of Man in Great Britain is a university lecturer and DarkSky advocate who describes a magical moment and highpoint in his career when he was invited to speak with astronaut Nicole Stott while she was on the International Space Station. I met Howard aboard the Viking Jupiter where he was serving as Resident Astronomer. I am so delighted that he has consented to share his knowledge with all of us.

As the Earth travels in its orbit around the Sun, the stars rise every night sky just under four minutes earlier every 24-hour period. Usually in astronomy, we advise sky-gazers what is visible on a seasonal basis, at approximately 22:00 UTC—defined as the winter, spring, summer and fall skies. However, as overnight flights travel during the hours of darkness, the sky changes quite noticeably. This column will cover what is visible between the times of 22:00 and 04:00 UTC, basically covering two consecutive seasons.

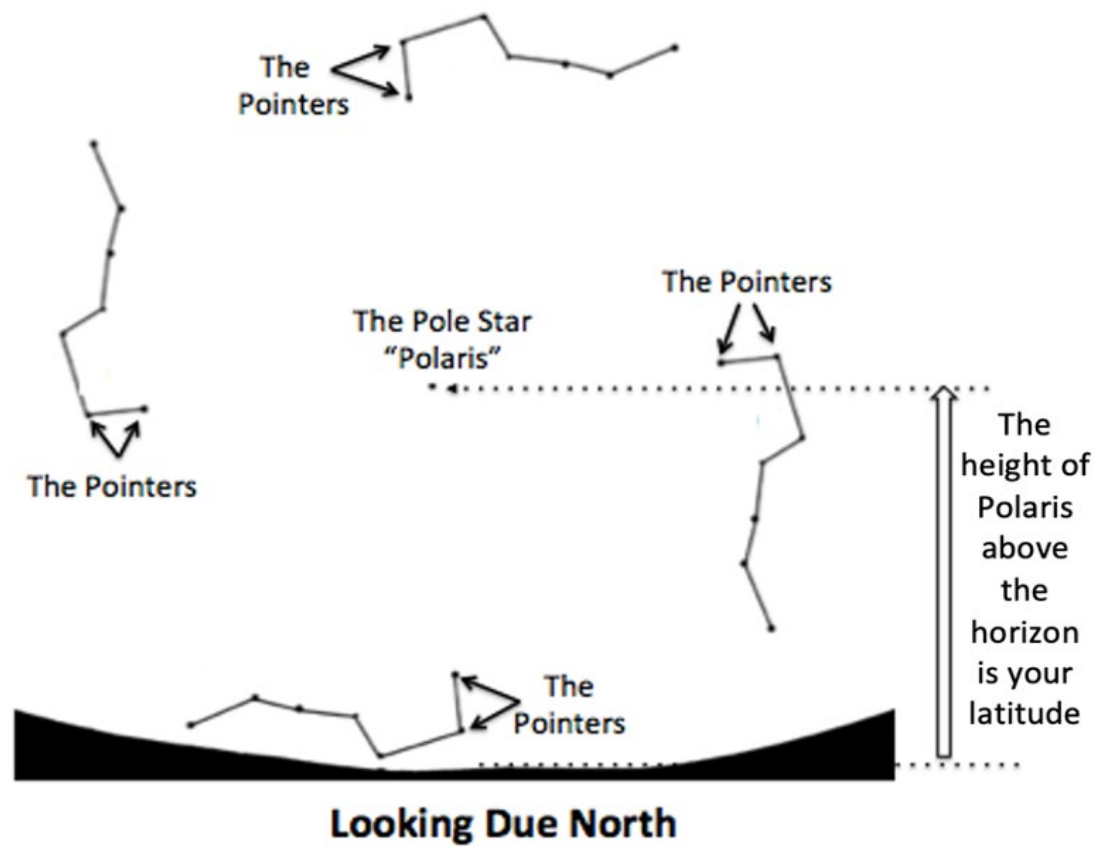
From an astronomical perspective, flight crew are in a fortunate position as they look from the flight deck for two reasons. Firstly, there will be minimal light pollution, as the flight deck instrumentation uses red lights to protect the flight crew's night vision. Secondly, the altitude of the aircraft, well above the cloud base, will mean the clarity of the stars is quite noticeable.

Looking towards the northern horizon, over just a few minutes time, you will notice that the sky appears to revolve around a specific point in the sky. This is called the Northern Celestial Pole (NCP), and we have a star very close to the NCP called Polaris, often just called the Pole or North star. If you were to fly directly over the geographical north pole, the NCP would be directly above the aircraft. However, if you are travelling near or close to the equator, the NCP will be on the northern horizon. The height of the Polaris above the horizon will always reflect your current latitude, as your flight-deck instrumentation will readily confirm.

At this time of year in the northern celestial sky, the familiar pattern of the Big Dipper is visible to the right of Polaris. The Big Dipper is what is known as an "asterism" consisting of just seven of the brightest stars in the constellation Ursa Major, the great bear. The stars of the Big Dipper can be used to find

Polaris and thus due north. The two stars at the bowl end of the asterism of the Big Dipper are called Merak and Dubhe. If you extend a line from these two stars about three times the distance between them, you will arrive at Polaris and the NCP.

If you're gazing without your instruments, you can easily work out an estimate of your latitude. Hold your arm with your fist upright in front of you with the bottom of your fist upon the horizon. Your fist represents approximately ten degrees of latitude. Measure how many fists high the star Polaris appears to be above the horizon. This a fundamental principal of celestial navigation used long before the vast array of instruments and equipment pilots at sea and in the air use today. In February, the Big Dipper is standing on its tail to the right or east of Polaris, but six hours later at 04:00 a.m. it will appear directly overhead.



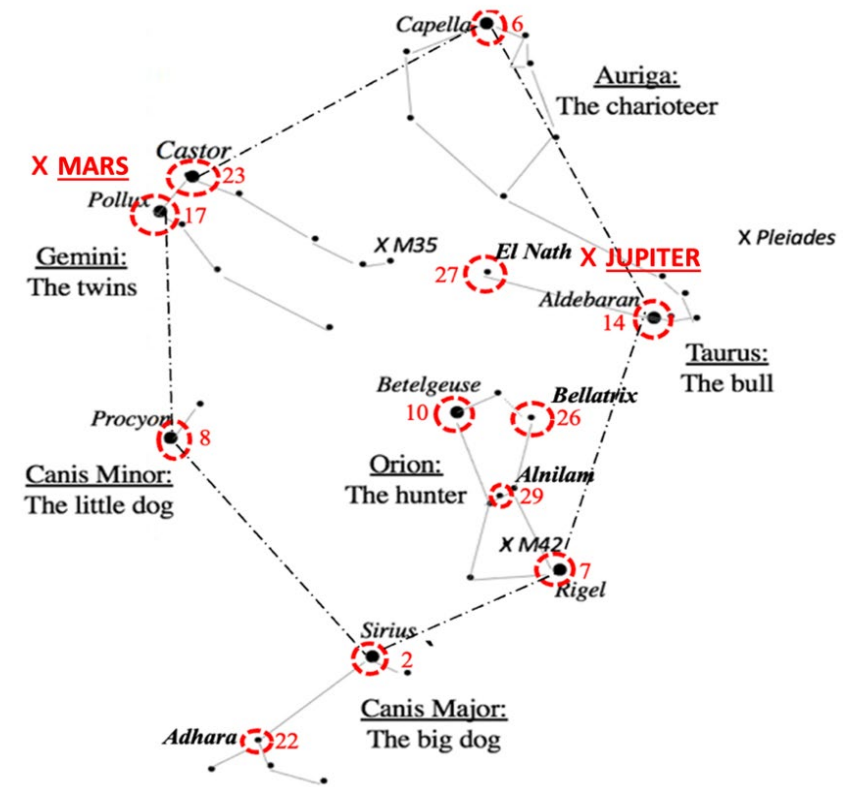
The chart above shows the Big Dipper’s rotation around Polaris, and during only a few hours flight time, will clearly show the rotational effect of the Plough (another name for the Big Dipper) moving around the NCP. Now looking toward the southern skies, the effect of the rotation is far more pronounced, and we see a succession of the constellations transiting across our southern sky.

The Big dipper moves 90 degrees counterclockwise, around the pole every six hours, (or every three months on a seasonal basis).

We also have in the sky the celestial equivalent of the Earth’s equator—the “celestial equator.” If you were flying over the north pole, the celestial equator would be at 90 degrees and would be the horizon in every direction. At the equator, the celestial equator

would be a line going from west to east passing directly overhead.

In February, turning to the south and western skies, there are no fewer than 12 very bright stars all quite close to each other. Add to this list two bright planets, Jupiter and Mars, and the sky is quite spectacular. Eleven of these 12 very bright stars comprise (or are within) a large hexagon shape, which dominates the southern sky. The next diagram shows the hexagon, which is another “asterism.” The hexagon is much larger than most people imagine and from a latitude of around 50 degrees, it stretches from the brightest star in the night sky, Sirius, near the horizon to Capella, almost overhead. The diagram also shows the location and ranking of all 12 stars in the top 30 of the brightest stars in our skies and shows the positions of the planets Jupiter in Taurus and Mars in Cancer.



The February Sky Looking Southwest

Turning to the planets visible in February 2025, the western sky at dusk has the very bright planet Venus visible. By far the brightest of any object in the entire night sky, Venus is unmistakable, shining very brilliantly. In the southeastern sky, Jupiter and Mars are also very bright and very easily seen. Jupiter nestles in the constellation Taurus and is the brightest object in this part of the sky, whilst to the left, within the faint constellation of Cancer is the distinctly red planet, Mars. We can also see Saturn in the evening sky and whilst it’s much fainter, it is the only bright object in the southwestern sky. During February, Saturn and Venus are quite close to each other.

On numerous occasions as a passenger, I have looked through the aircraft window for sightings of the aurora or northern lights usually using a blanket or pillow over my

head (often much to the consternation of fellow passengers and flight attendants). The aurorae (borealis and australis) are normally only seen from polar regions of the world. In the northern hemisphere, it can frequently be seen from anywhere inside the Arctic Circle.

In 1610 Galileo Galilei made a significant number of astronomical discoveries, including the first observations of sunspots. Sunspots are basically areas on the Sun with a lower temperature compared to the surrounding area, so they appear darker. By measuring the number of sunspots on the solar disc, it has become apparent that the Sun has a distinctive eleven-year cycle of activity. The peak and lower levels of this activity are called the “solar maxima” and “solar minima” respectively. We have long been aware that such activity has a direct effect on terrestrial phenomena such as the aurora. In 2024/2025

we are at solar maxima with many spectacular sightings of the aurora.

The most common colour of the aurora is green, and this is caused by oxygen. Upper-atmosphere oxygen can also produce red aurorae, whilst yellow, purple and blue aurorae are caused by the presence of nitrogen. Aurora takes the form of an auroral oval, which is centered on the magnetic poles of the Earth. The size of the auroral oval will depend on the quantity of incoming material from the solar wind, which is itself dependent on the level of activity on the Sun. If the solar activity is at a higher level, then the oval will extend southwards where it will be seen much further south than usual. Given the height and clarity of the sky from an aircraft flight deck, the chance of seeing an auroral display are very good, especially in the forthcoming months.

Finally, as I am sure you will have noticed, there are many bright satellites in orbit around the Earth and these can clearly be seen usually passing from west to east. The brightest of these is the International Space Station (ISS) which can be as bright as Venus. Unlike on the ground, given the changing location of an aircraft, it is difficult to identify just which object you may be observing, but that very bright one is almost certainly the ISS. The ISS has been continually occupied since

late 2000, and if you think you are travelling quite rapidly as you fly around the globe, spare a thought for those astronauts on the ISS who are travelling around the Earth in 90 minutes at over 17,000 mph.

I'll be back with more for next season's views from the flight deck.



Howard L.G. Parkin MBE. BSc. BEd. FRAS.



About the Author ✈️

Inspired by the space race in the 1960s, **Howard Parkin** has been an enthusiastic astronomer since childhood and has become an accomplished and entertaining speaker on the subject throughout the... [Read More...](#)

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Can You Land This Plane?

An entertaining thought exercise

WRITTEN BY: RICHARD SWINDELL

So, there you are, settling into a little nap about mid-way through your transcontinental flight from New York to San Francisco, when a flight attendant says over the PA: “Ladies and gentlemen, is there a pilot on board, if so, please ring your call button.” You look around the cabin, and not seeing anyone reaching for it, you press the little blue overhead button. A flight attendant quickly arrives at your seat and confirms you’re a pilot then asks you to come to the front of the plane. There in the forward galley, she opens the flight deck door and shoves you through it.

Another flight attendant is standing inside the spacious cockpit of the Boeing 777, but the first thing you really notice is that the captain and first officer seem to be asleep. The flight attendant grabs your shoulders and says: “CAN YOU LAND THIS PLANE?”

“Surely, you can’t be serious.”

“I am serious...and don’t call me Shirley.”

This is a moment that many pilots quietly dream of—the opportunity to save the day

and put hard earned private-pilot skills to use. Despite the more or less successful outcome parodied in the industry-cherished (though completely inappropriate) movie *Airplane!*, but before proceeding with this fun little thought exercise, let’s be regrettably very clear about this—if you do not have experience flying transport-category, jet aircraft, effectively, you have zero chance of landing this plane. You may be a good pilot and with the right training you could absolutely learn to fly one; but right now, in this moment, you do not have the skills or knowledge to do it. But for the sake of this article, let’s talk about what you could do to maybe...MAYBE, get it on the ground with a lot of help and a lot of luck. So, let’s dig in.

First, get the flight attendant to help you move one of the pilots – whichever one is in a seat you would be the most comfortable occupying. Then, sit down and DON’T TOUCH ANYTHING. Since the plane is still flying, the autopilot system is obviously engaged, and the radios are probably tuned to appropriate frequencies. Take just a minute to look over the digital instruments and navigation panels in front of you. If you have some G-1000 or similar time these might be recognizable; but if you’ve only ever flown steam gauges, you are going to drown in a sea of information. However, the basic six pack is there if you just look for it. Speed is on the left, altitude on the right with a VSI, attitude in the middle, with a digital compass and heading information beneath it.

The pilots may or may not have had a speaker selected to broadcast the radio into the flight

deck, so look down next to you below and to the side of the throttle quadrant and find a button for speaker by the radio panel – select it and make sure the volume is turned up. Now, find the hand mic on your other side. Once you’ve done this (and taken a deep breath), key the mic, declare “mayday” three times and wait. If nothing happens, try again. If still nothing, you’ve probably left the previous ATC sector, so try the mayday call on 121.5. The radios should be reasonably familiar and fairly easy for you to figure out. Once you’ve managed to contact ATC, identify yourself and the flight number, and in slow, plain English tell the controller what’s going on (the pilots are incapacitated), and your level of piloting experience (e.g., private pilot, instrument rating, etc.). ATC will likely give you a discrete frequency so they can deal with you directly and will notify the airline of the situation. In turn, the airline will have an experienced training captain on a radio patch to assist you with maneuvering the aircraft. The airline and ATC will also begin working on a plan to help you get down. The good news is, if you’ve gotten this far and you’re in a Boeing or Airbus aircraft, these have auto-land systems that will afford you a chance at surviving. However, if you happen to be flying on a regional jet (an Embraer or Canadair), these aircraft, although reliable and very sophisticated, are not equipped with auto-land capability and are, frankly, even more challenging to fly than their larger turbojet brethren.

While you wait for a radio patch to a training captain, try to familiarize yourself with

where the flap handle is (to the right of the throttles), the gear lever (center front above the throttles), and try to identify buttons to control autopilot airspeed and altitude – but do not twist, turn, move, or push anything. Once the training captain is on the line, they will quickly assess your piloting experience and then talk you through basic handling of the aircraft. By now, ATC and the airline have probably worked out whether to have you attempt (in this scenario) a landing at San Francisco or go elsewhere. Because SFO can be a challenging airport for experienced airline pilots, and because the idea of a B777 hurling towards a major metropolitan city is not a great idea, they are likely going to have you go somewhere else with, honestly, less risk to the local populace. So, do not be surprised when they say you'll be landing at (for example) Sacramento. In any case, a towered airport with effectively nothing around it, good weather (hopefully this happens during the day), with sufficient crash/fire/rescue services, lots of runway, and one that offers instrument approaches that can be programmed into the flight management computer (FMC), which is what you will probably be guided to do next.

Side note: You're almost certainly being followed at this point by fighter aircraft scrambled by NORAD – you won't see them, just know that you're being tailed.

Once you've been walked through reconfiguring "the box" to have the autopilot navigate the plane towards Sacramento (SMF), the training captain will start walking you through how to configure the plane for

the auto landing. This includes setting the autobrakes, selecting the correct airspeeds when told to do so, arming the flight spoilers, as well as manipulating the flaps and gear when the time comes. If there is still a flight attendant on the flight deck with you, tell them the plan and to inform the rest of the cabin crew. Have them make a passenger announcement about the emergency landing. The cabin crew will probably already know to prepare for a non-routine landing, but if your cognitive and emotional bandwidth can handle it right now, make sure they are doing this.

The last thing before ATC and the training captain start guiding you down and getting you into position for an auto landing will be a review of things to do as soon as you touch down and are stopped which will include how to set the parking brakes and shutting off the engines. As you touch down, fire trucks will begin following you down the runway and as soon as you've come to a stop, the flight attendants will probably open all available doors that provide a safe exit to help everyone deplane as quickly as possible.

Now, make sure your seatbelt is fastened and follow all instructions to the best of your ability.

"Good luck, we're all counting on you."



About the Author

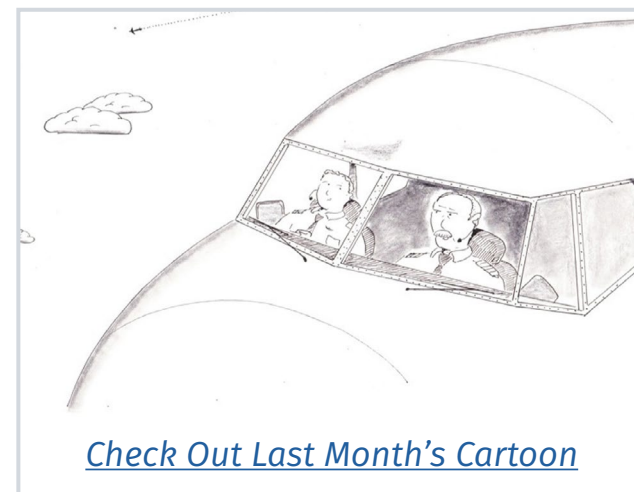
Richard Swindell left active-duty military service and transitioned to the airline industry where he flies and works as a line check airman for a major airline. [Read More...](#)

coffee & pretzels

Greg Kaley



Dick! I must thank you! After that last four-day trip I endured with you, I submitted my captain bid and got it!



[Check Out Last Month's Cartoon](#)



About the Author

Greg Kaley is a pilot with a major airline who also happens to be a cartoonist. He started the cartoon "Coffee & Pretzels" in 2016. After graduating from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (Prescott Campus), he flight-instructed and subsequently... [Read More...](#)

Strength in Numbers

Aviation community forces delay of controversial FAA policy

WRITTEN BY: MATTHEW BULOW, ESQ.



Proposed Initial Denial Policy

Near the end of 2024, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced its intent to implement a new policy affecting the processing and handling of airman medical-certificate applications (Initial Denial Policy). Under the Initial Denial Policy, “incomplete” applications must be “denied” rather than “deferred.” A denial would generally be accompanied by a reconsideration letter, highlighting the documentation the airman must gather and provide for possible consideration on a future application.¹ Currently, incomplete applications typically prompt a deferral and a request for further information within a specified time. An incomplete application is an application that does not include all the examinations,

medical records, criminal records, or other documentation necessary for the FAA to determine an airman’s eligibility to hold a particular class of medical certificate. An outright denial indicates that the airman is **NOT** aeromedically fit to fly while a deferral merely indicates that a medical certificate cannot be granted without more information. A deferral leaves several other doors open for the airman in aviation while they await a determination regarding their eligibility while denial slams most of those doors shut, sometimes permanently.

Consequences

While the intent of the Initial Denial Policy is to streamline the FAA’s undeniably slow and cumbersome review process for airmen

applying for medical certification, the unintended consequences of implementation far outweigh any potential gains in efficiency of review. Notwithstanding whether the Initial Denial Policy would actually reduce the administrative burden on the FAA and wait times for airmen, the consequences of denying applications outright would create more confusion and unjustifiably infringe upon the ability of airmen to safely pursue various aviation activities.

In addition to losing the privileges granted directly by an FAA medical certificate, airmen whose applications are denied miss out on additional opportunities, such as getting a sport-pilot certification or flying under BasicMed. BasicMed was implemented by Congress specifically to reduce the administrative burden on the FAA in reviewing airman medical applications by allowing pilots to operate certain aircraft under certain conditions without holding an FAA medical certificate. An airman who is denied a medical certificate is not eligible to fly under BasicMed and must therefore pursue FAA medical certification if they hope to fly. It is not difficult to imagine a scenario where an airman would like to test the waters of FAA medical certification, but if the process of demonstrating their aeromedical fitness proves too costly or burdensome, they will ultimately choose to operate safely under BasicMed. Under the Initial Denial Policy, an airman who provides an incomplete application for airman medical certification cannot subsequently fly under BasicMed, at least not until they complete the process

and receive an airman medical certificate. Accordingly, initially denying airmen under the Policy will force them into the FAA’s medical certification process, thereby increasing the FAA’s administrative burden in direct contradiction of Congressional intent; not to mention that the process often costs airmen thousands or tens of thousands of dollars out of pocket to obtain the necessary evaluation and documentation, which is either impractical or impossible for many.

In addition to the limiting effect of a denial on an individual’s legal ability to exercise other privileges, a denial creates a negative stigma against the airman in the community and with potential employers. Airmen are required to report whether their medical certificate has “ever been denied, suspended, or revoked,” on every subsequent application for medical certification and often on employment and insurance applications. An affirmative answer to that question, particularly on employment screenings, may doom the airman’s chances at success because each time it creates a presumption against their aeromedical fitness.

To add insult to injury for these airmen, denying applications for medical certification that are deemed “incomplete” requires airmen to return to their Aviation Medical Examiners (AMEs) for another costly physical exam and review after they collect any additional information that is requested for reconsideration.

Ultimately, the misguided Initial Denial

Policy would place an undue burden on airmen rather than address the underlying issues of efficiency within the FAA's Office of Aerospace Medicine. Even if an applicant provides all the standard documentation required based on their condition or case type, it is not uncommon to see the FAA request additional information due to the applicant's unique circumstance. Under the Initial Denial Policy, that applicant stands to be denied even if the request is minor while the airman is aeromedically fit otherwise. The Policy would require airmen with any medical condition, or possible regulatory condition, with the help of their AME, to read the FAA's mind prior to applying for certification to determine what documentation is "necessary" in their particular case. Put simply, the Initial Denial Policy would allow the FAA to pass the buck to airmen rather than do the hard but necessary work of improving their own processes in order to provide each airman the individualized medical review they deserve before permanently marking their application as "denied."

Staying The FAA's Heavy Hand

On December 13, 2024, various groups within the aviation industry penned a collective [letter to the Federal Air Surgeon](#), Dr. Susan Northrup, requesting a stay in the implementation of the Initial Denial Policy. The letter noted that the Policy was "driven by the FAA's interpretation of Section 801 in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024." It also noted that the Initial Denial Policy was contrary to the Federal Air Surgeon's stated goal of "getting to yes," and

provided alternative methods for achieving the FAA's goals while reducing administrative burden such as modernization of the data collection and storage systems, increased transparency in the medical certificate application review process. The December 13 letter was signed by fourteen industry associations and unions representing tens of thousands of pilots across the United States and the globe, clearly demonstrating the aviation community's disagreement with the Initial Denial Policy.

Within the United States Congress, Representative Sam Graves, the Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and an airline transport pilot, called for a stay to the implementation of the Initial Denial Policy, echoing the concerns of the December 13 letter and again voicing the sentiment of the aviation community at large.

On December 18, 2024, [the FAA announced](#) that it would postpone the implementation of the Initial Denial Policy until March 1, 2025. In that announcement, the FAA stated that "[p]ostponing allows the FAA additional time to educate the pilot community and to host a listening session with various aviation associations in early January." In contrast to briefings previously provided to AMEs and pilot advocacy groups, the FAA stated in its December 18, 2024 announcement that "[t]he decision to implement this change was not associated with the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, but the need to provide immediate answers to airmen regarding the medical certification process." The announcement

by the FAA therefore indicates that the Initial Denial Policy was not a misguided interpretation of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 but was instead developed and implemented at the administrator's or a delegated representative's discretion with the intent to provide airmen with immediate answers regarding their eligibility status. This writer questions whether the Initial Denial Policy makes any progress at all toward that goal. A blanket denial with a reconsideration letter does not provide any additional information to the airman that a deferral and request for further information cannot. The Initial Denial Policy does little to nothing in pursuit of increased transparency and efficiency and instead simply discourages airmen and aspiring airmen from seriously pursuing medical certification simply because the FAA is unable or unwilling to handle its workload effectively.

What's Next?

So, what will happen to the Initial Denial Policy and how should pilots prepare? Frankly, we don't know. The FAA has indicated its intent to implement the Initial Denial Policy on March 1, 2025, but as we have seen, the aviation community can affect real change. The FAA has announced that it will hold a "listening session" with the community prior to implementation of the Initial Denial Policy. This listening session will be crucial for aviation groups articulating the pitfalls of the Initial Denial Policy to the Office of Aerospace Medicine. The aviation community should continue to voice its concern across

any available forums to clearly display the disagreement from actual pilots, ATCs, and other parties with a legitimate interest in aviation and the safety of the National Airspace System. Hopefully, with enough insight from interested parties, the FAA will realize its mistake and either revoke or revise the Initial Denial Policy prior to implementation to better suit the needs and concerns of both the aviation community and the FAA.

If the Initial Denial Policy is implemented, then pilots must ensure that their application is "complete" prior to submission by working with their medical providers, AMEs, and aviation attorneys to determine what documentation is necessary and to provide all that documentation in a timely manner. Under the Initial Denial Policy, airmen will have only one chance to get their application for medical certification correct, otherwise, they will face the often-severe consequences of denial.

Reference

- 1 "Reconsideration" is a misnomer in this case because incomplete applications will never be properly considered in the first place and therefore any "reconsideration" would truly mark the first substantive consideration of that application.



About the Author

Matthew Bulow, Esq. is an aviation attorney at Ramos Law in Denver, Colorado. Matthew currently practices FAA medical-certificate defense exclusively in... [Read More...](#)

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How to Boost Your Well-Being With a Digital Detox

WRITTEN BY: REINI THIJSSSEN

In today's fast-paced world, it's becoming increasingly difficult to escape the grip of our digital devices. We are constantly online, and this constant connectivity can significantly affect our overall well-being. This is where the concept of a "digital detox" comes in. This article explores the concept of a digital detox, highlighting its surprising benefits for your overall well-being. It also provides practical exercises to help you implement a digital detox. Applying these tools allows you to reclaim balance in your daily life and cultivate healthier media habits.

What Is a Digital Detox?

A digital detox is a period during which you intentionally disconnect from your digital devices and limit your screen time. It is a conscious effort to reduce your dependence on technology and regain control over your life without the constant presence of screens. If you wonder whether you need a digital detox, take a moment to reflect on your daily routine. How many hours do you spend staring at screens? Statistics show that the average person spends about seven to nine

hours in front of screens daily. As more and more aspects of life move online, screens have become deeply integrated into our daily lives—from the moment you wake up with your phone, throughout the day with your laptop, tablet, or TV, all the way until you go to bed.

The Benefits

1. Reduced Stress and Anxiety

Constant notifications, emails, and social media updates can quickly elevate your stress levels. A digital detox breaks the cycle of endless information overload. Without the constant digital distractions, your mind has a chance to relax, which in turn reduces stress and anxiety.

2. Improved Mental Well-being

A digital detox can also positively affect your mental well-being. Do you often find yourself scrolling through social media? Research shows that whether consciously or unconsciously, you constantly compare your life to what you see on social media. Detoxing from these platforms can help you focus more on your own life and happiness rather than continuously comparing yourself to others.

3. Better Sleep Quality

One of the most studied and helpful benefits of a digital detox is improving sleep quality. An important reminder is that all screens emit blue light that can disrupt your body's natural sleep rhythm. By doing a digital detox, you can

experience firsthand how disconnecting before bed can quickly positively impact your sleep patterns.

4. Increased Physical Activity

A sedentary lifestyle is closely linked to excessive screen time. A digital detox can inspire you to get up and move. You may feel more inclined to engage in outdoor activities, take walks, or even find new motivation for new exercise goals. You will soon discover that rediscovering physical activities improves your health and boosts your mood.

5. The Positive Impact on Relationships

Have you ever been with friends or family yet felt disconnected because everyone's eyes were glued to their screens? This is a common scenario in today's digital age. A digital detox can help break this cycle and foster real, meaningful connections.

Disconnecting from digital devices allows you to spend more quality time with loved ones. For example, try suggesting a tech-free zone during a cozy family night—no screens, just conversations or a board game, helping everyone reconnect and enjoy each other's company.

6. Boosting Productivity and Creativity

Digital distractions often hinder productivity. While multitasking may seem efficient, it can actually reduce focus and performance. A digital detox helps you regain the ability to focus on one task at a time, increasing your overall productivity.

Moreover, the constant stream of information can stifle your creativity. Taking a break from digital devices creates mental space for inspiration to flow. Great ideas often arise while walking outside rather than staring at a computer screen.

Tips for a Successful Digital Detox

1. Identify and Manage Digital Triggers

We all have triggers that prompt us to check our devices mindlessly, whether it's boredom, stress, or habit. Identifying these triggers is the first step in managing them. Replace digital distractions with healthier alternatives.

2. Set Clear Goals and Boundaries

Setting clear goals and boundaries is essential when planning a digital detox. Decide how long you want to detox and what activities you will engage in during that time. A digital detox is a great opportunity to rediscover the joy of non-digital activities. Try rediscovering activities that do not involve screens, such as reading physical books or magazines, cooking, gardening, or writing.

3. Promote Mindful Digital Use

After your detox, it's important to practice mindful digital use. Be intentional about when and how you use your devices. Setting specific screen-free times during the day can help maintain a healthy balance.

4. Start small; for example, set a **Screen-Free Morning Routine**.

Start your day without touching any digital device for at least the first 30-60 minutes after you wake up. Instead of checking your phone or scrolling through emails, you can connect with your spouse, do some light stretching or yoga, enjoy a cup of tea or coffee while journaling, read a physical book, or go for a walk. These help you begin your day with more focus and intention rather than jumping straight into the digital world.

5. Another way to promote mindful digital use is to establish **Screen-Free zones**,

which are spaces in your home or workplace that are free from screens. For example:

- The dining table: No phones, tablets, or laptops during meals
- The bedroom: No screens in the bedroom to help improve sleep quality
- The bathroom: Avoid checking your phone while in the bathroom to disconnect and be present.

Having dedicated spaces that encourage screen-free activities can help you unwind and recharge.

6. Set **Tech-Free Hours** by designating specific hours in the day when you intentionally disconnect from all digital devices.

For example:

- No screens after 8 PM: To improve your sleep hygiene, avoid using digital devices an hour before bedtime.
- Tech-free weekends: Try to disconnect for an entire weekend or a full day.
- Focus on activities that require no screens—outdoor activities, hobbies, or spending time with loved ones.

7. **Social Media Fast** - Choose a day, weekend, or longer to disconnect from social media platforms completely. Try to:

- Deactivate your accounts temporarily or use apps that block access to social media.
- Avoid all digital communication that is not essential (no checking emails, messaging apps, etc.).
- Use the time to focus on hobbies, personal projects, or offline connections.

8. **Mindful Digital Consumption**

Practice more intentional use of digital devices. This includes:

- Setting specific times to check your emails, messages, or social media (e.g., once in the morning and once in the evening) rather than constantly checking throughout the day.

- Curating your content—unsubscribe from unnecessary email lists, mute or unfollow accounts that cause stress, and be selective with what you engage with online.

Final Thoughts

In a world flooded with digital devices, it's easy to overlook their impact on our health. A digital detox may seem daunting, but the benefits are truly remarkable. The advantages are well worth it, from better sleep and mental well-being to improved relationships and heightened creativity. Challenge yourself to disconnect for a day, a weekend, or even longer. Embrace the benefits of a digital detox and take a step toward a healthier, more balanced life.

If you are struggling to find balance between screen time and real-life connections, or if you need guidance on managing technology use in a healthier way, reach out to Emerald Mental Health. You can email reini@emeraldmentalhealth.com or visit www.emeraldmentalhealth.com to request a free consultation.



About the Author ✈️

Reini Thijssen is a licensed mental health counselor (LMHC, LPC) and a certified life coach specializing in supporting pilots and individuals in high-demand professions both within and outside of aviation. She has been a writer for Aero Crew News since 2019 and covers various aviation-related topics... [Read More...](#)



STRESS LEVEL

Stress Management for Pilots: Safeguarding Your Medical and Your Well-being

WRITTEN BY: SHANNON TORRES

Pilots are often seen as the epitome of calm under pressure, skillfully navigating challenges at 30,000 feet. But behind that composed exterior, many pilots wrestle with significant stressors that can affect both their professional performance and personal lives. Acknowledging and addressing stress is not just about feeling better—it’s about protecting your future, including your FAA medical certification. By taking proactive steps today, you’re making a valuable investment in your long-term career as a pilot.

The Reality of Stress in Aviation

Flying is a high-stakes profession. From managing challenging weather conditions to meeting the rigorous demands of training and checkrides; it’s no wonder stress can creep in. Yet, in the aviation community, there’s often an unspoken rule—appear strong and never admit there’s an issue. And what we’ve seen over time is that unfortunately this mindset can lead to denial, burnout, and even jeopardize medical certifications.

Understanding that stress is a completely normal part of being human is the first step towards managing it. In fact, experiencing a bit of stress can motivate us and help improve our focus. But when it becomes chronic, it can affect our decision-making, disrupt our sleep, and even lead to more serious issues like anxiety or depression. If we don’t take care of it, stress can escalate into a situation that could require reporting to the FAA.

Acknowledging your place on this scale isn’t a sign of weakness; it’s an opportunity to take control before the stress takes control of you.

Actionable Steps to Manage Stress

Prioritize Physical Health: Regular exercise, a nutritious diet, and sufficient sleep are foundational to managing stress. Pilots, especially those with irregular schedules, should make these non-negotiable.

Practice Mindfulness and Relaxation

Techniques: Deep breathing, meditation, or progressive muscle relaxation can help you stay grounded during high-pressure situations.

Develop a Pre-Flight Routine: Establishing consistent habits before flying can create a sense of control and calm. Whether it’s a quick mental checklist or a five-minute meditation, find what works for you.

Set Boundaries: Know your limits and don’t overextend yourself. This includes saying no to additional commitments when you’re already stretched thin.

Reach Out for Support: Talking to a trusted friend, mentor, or coach can provide perspective and reduce the isolation that often comes with stress.

The Stress Scale: Where Are You?

Recognizing your place on the stress continuum at any given time can be a game-changer. Let’s use this simple model as an example:

- **Green (Thriving):** Stress is minimal. You feel energized and focused, with effective coping mechanisms in place.
- **Yellow (Managing):** You’re stretched thin, but still functioning well. Stress is present but manageable.
- **Orange (Struggling):** Stress feels overwhelming, impacting your performance, relationships, or sleep.
- **Red (Crisis):** Persistent feelings of burnout, hopelessness, or emotional exhaustion dominate.

Resources Are Available

You are not alone in this journey. There are resources tailored specifically for pilots that truly respect your privacy and understand the unique demands of aviation. Seeking support early can help you manage stress and ensure you stay ahead of any issues that may affect your medical certification.

Protect Your Medical by Taking Action Now

Taking proactive steps to manage stress isn't just about protecting your well-being—it's about safeguarding your career. By addressing stress head-on, you're doing your part to maintain your FAA medical and making sure you're fit to fly both physically AND mentally.

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed or uncertain about how to manage stress, please don't hesitate to reach out. Whether you're looking for practical tools, someone to talk to, or connections to additional support, there are resources available to help you, and you don't have to navigate it alone. Send me a message or email me at Shannon@aviationconversations.com, and I'll help guide you toward the level of support that fits your unique needs! Your well-being, both in and out of the cockpit, is worth prioritizing.



About the Author

Shannon Torres, a former CACREP-Accredited Counselor, embarked on a unique career journey by transitioning to aviation in 2019. During her tenure with a 121 carrier, she became acutely aware of the unseen struggles and stressors faced by pilots. [Read More...](#)



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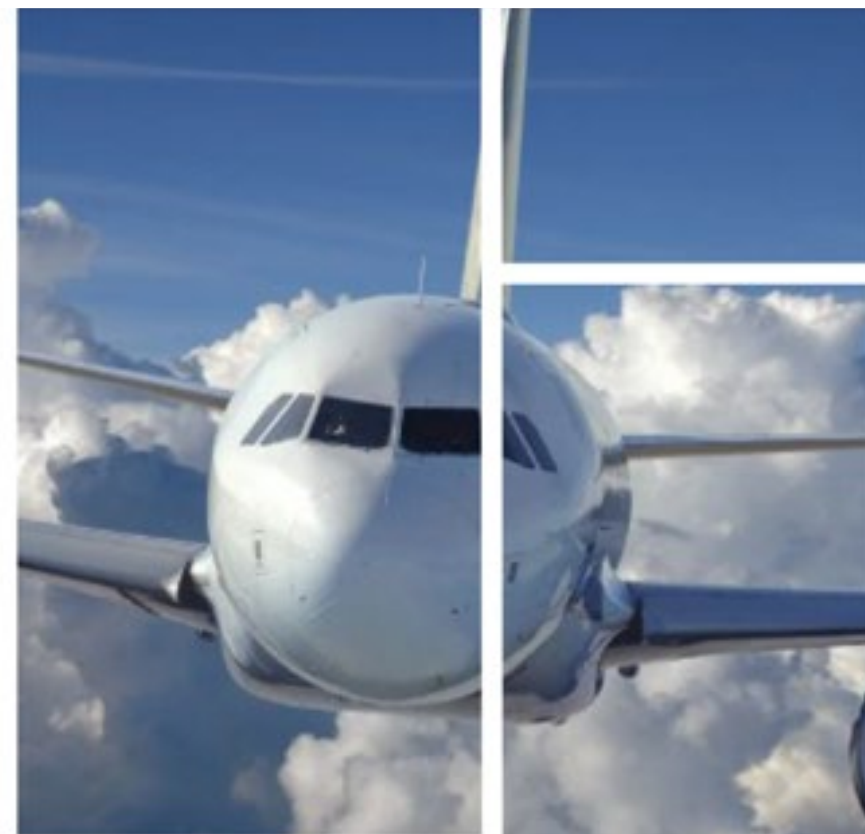
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-  **Hiring Status of Each Airline**

The Month of Love (for Yourself, too)

Taking care of yourself is a commitment, too.

WRITTEN BY: ERIC RAY



It's February with all its goodness of love, chocolates and pre-spring-break anxiety. I have mentioned the need to determine your "why" when it comes to making change, but I also want you to consider the psychology of your plan. I recently watched a video about 90s fitness icon, Susan Powter, who struggled with obesity and only made temporary fixes to lose the weight but always failed. It wasn't until she addressed the psychology of what was holding her back did she make lasting change. The same theory not only applies to nutrition, but to fitness, and to finance/debt management.

Know your trigger(s)

When it comes to focusing on a plan or staying focused on gains you have made, you really need to understand what your negative and positive triggers are. Only you can make that assessment, but for me it's either chocolate or having an

adult beverage. When it comes to smelling chocolate or having that first tasty bite, it's like a light bulb comes on. It's easy to have just one more, because what would it hurt. When it comes to alcohol consumption, for me that's a trigger to eat something salty, like chips or popcorn. While having just one chip isn't terrible; who in their right mind would only eat just one chip? Once you understand what triggers you to overconsume, you have to become more conscious of what you are putting into your body. For me, that means having a few bites of chocolate and a handful of chips followed by a glass of water. Water helps you to get full and helps your brain signal, "No thanks for more—I am already full." By the way, it also helps to limit the amount of those adult beverages you consume.

Focus on the positive

You are going to fall down. You are going to go off your diet or give up on a day of working out to rest. Starting the New Year (with a new you) sometimes leads to fatigue and falling into the rationale to give up. What I encourage you to do is focus on how far you've come, even if it's only been a few days. The idea to take your fitness and nutrition journey one day at a time. Be encouraged by just creating a plan and working it.

Don't give up because you gave in

When it comes to fitness and nutrition, when you first become motivated, it can be a daunting task. You will be sore, and you will be hungry because of the changes you are asking your body to go through. Sometimes that fatigue or hunger will drive you to take a day off or use a "cheat day." Don't feel bad

when you have a lapse. You need to get back to it and stick with your plan. The plan can be modified as long as it meets the goal you have established. Goals should be reviewed and modified to work with you and your desired outcome.

You should have a plan and understand your *why*. Understanding your *why* comes down to knowing what your triggers are and how to modify your routine to avoid or reduce exposure to those triggers. Often it helps to have a partner or coach to support you in your journey as they will help hold you accountable. Take it one day at a time and over time, you'll have your day!



About the Author

Eric Ray is a certified personal trainer and nutrition coach. He is the co-creator of the Hii360 Coaching Method and current president of Hii360 Coaching. [Read More...](#)



It Can Happen to Me

Losing one's medical is a potential threat for which we can prepare.

WRITTEN BY: JONATHAN SCHULTZ

On day in February 2024, I was a healthy, 27-year-old captain flying a Phenom 300 for a fractional operator. The next day, I found myself calling in sick and have not been able to fly since. This unexpected turn of events is one of the greatest fears a pilot has. Many pilots, especially younger ones, do not anticipate facing medical issues at such an early stage in their careers. I had always assumed that serious medical concerns would be something to face in my 40s or 50s. That hazardous attitude hit me hard and fast: it did happen to me!

How Did I Prepare?

Although I never expected to lose my medical certificate, I had made some preparations just in case.

Emergency Savings Fund:

- **Six-Month Emergency Fund:** I had established an emergency savings fund to cover six months of living expenses. This fund has been crucial in preventing me from taking on expensive debt. Since it typically takes time for disability benefits to begin, it is vital to have enough money to cover expenses.
- **How to Build It:** A general rule of thumb is to save 3 to 6 months of living expenses. For pilots, who may face furloughs, medical issues, or company bankruptcies, it is wise to consider having up to 12 months or even more to deal with these pilot job-related issues.

Long-Term Disability (LTD) Insurance:

- **Additional LTD Coverage:** I opted for additional LTD coverage offered by my benefits package. LTD provides a source of income if you're unable to work due to illness or injury, typically after short-term disability benefits expire. The buy-up allowed me to go from 40% of my salary to 60%.
- **How It Works:** LTD benefits typically begin after a waiting period (usually equal to the duration of short-term disability benefits) and can provide long-term coverage for months or even years if you are unable to return to work due to a disability. At my fractional company this is separate from pilot loss of medical/license insurance. Please check what your benefits cover at your airline. Let me know if you need help investigating, even simulating what it might look like if you encountered a disability situation like mine.
- **Loss of Medical (License) Insurance:** At my fractional, loss of medical/license was separate from disability. This only took effect if disability did not cover me. One example of this would be a prescription medication that would prevent me from flying, but not from working a regular job. My LTD covered me for up to 60% thanks to the buy-up offered, however Loss of Medical (License) insurance would have only covered 40% of my salary.

What Could I Have Done Better?

Even though I took some proactive steps, there were a few areas where I could have better prepared.

Anticipating Medical Expenses:

- **Extra Costs for Medical Procedures:** What I did not anticipate were the additional medical expenses. When planning your emergency fund, it's important to factor in your healthcare plan's deductible. I unexpectedly had to pay several thousand dollars out of pocket. While pilots often receive great benefits, not everything is covered, and claims can be denied even if your doctor deems a procedure necessary.
- **Understand the Difference in Insurance Options:** It is crucial to review the specifics of your company's disability and medical plans. These plans can vary significantly, and it is important to know what it covers and how much, so you can have a plan if your health declines.

How You Should Prepare

To protect yourself financially, it's essential to be proactive about securing disability insurance and medical coverage:

- **Disability Buy-Up Options:** Explore opportunities to increase your LTD coverage to better match your income and plan for when things go wrong. A standard LTD policy may not be sufficient to replace your entire income, particularly for pilots.

Check and see if your LTD policy covers pilot medical related issues.

Loss of Medical Coverage: Research additional medical-coverage options for pilots. Many companies already provide this, and some offer extra coverage buy-up options. If yours does not, investigate the potential of getting some coverage outside of your job.

- **Invest in a Healthy Lifestyle:** The food you eat can drastically affect your health. It is very hard to eat healthy as a pilot being on the road all the time and having limited options. Try to find healthy options at restaurants to limit the intake of bad food that can ruin your health over time, and on your days off don't live on fast food. Working out at the hotel gym is something I did not do often enough. Sometimes it's hard to get motivated to go to the hotel gym after a long day of flying, but working out and staying active can also drastically improve your health in the long term and keep you flying.

Questions You Should Ask Yourself:

- How much money will I need to cover all my expenses if something happens?
- Do I have adequate disability coverage, and does it cover everything I need?
- What do I need to do now to ensure the gap in disability coverage wouldn't be a challenge in the worst-case scenario?
- If I become disabled and work a different job, how will that affect my disability?

- For example, some long-term disability policies stop paying out if you exceed a certain percentage of your pre-disability income.
- What will I do if I am unable to fly again?

I decided to follow my other passion, finance, and joined Leading Edge Financial Planning. In this role, I assist pilots with managing their finances and work with them to achieve their goals. I also help them create financial security, ensuring they feel confident about their future, even if they lose their medical certificate.

Please don't hesitate to reach out, if I can help with your situation. My hope is that I can help or even prevent others from going through what I did. Sometimes it's not something you can control but there are many things that you can and should do to mitigate the potential risk of a disability.

Thank you and fly safe!

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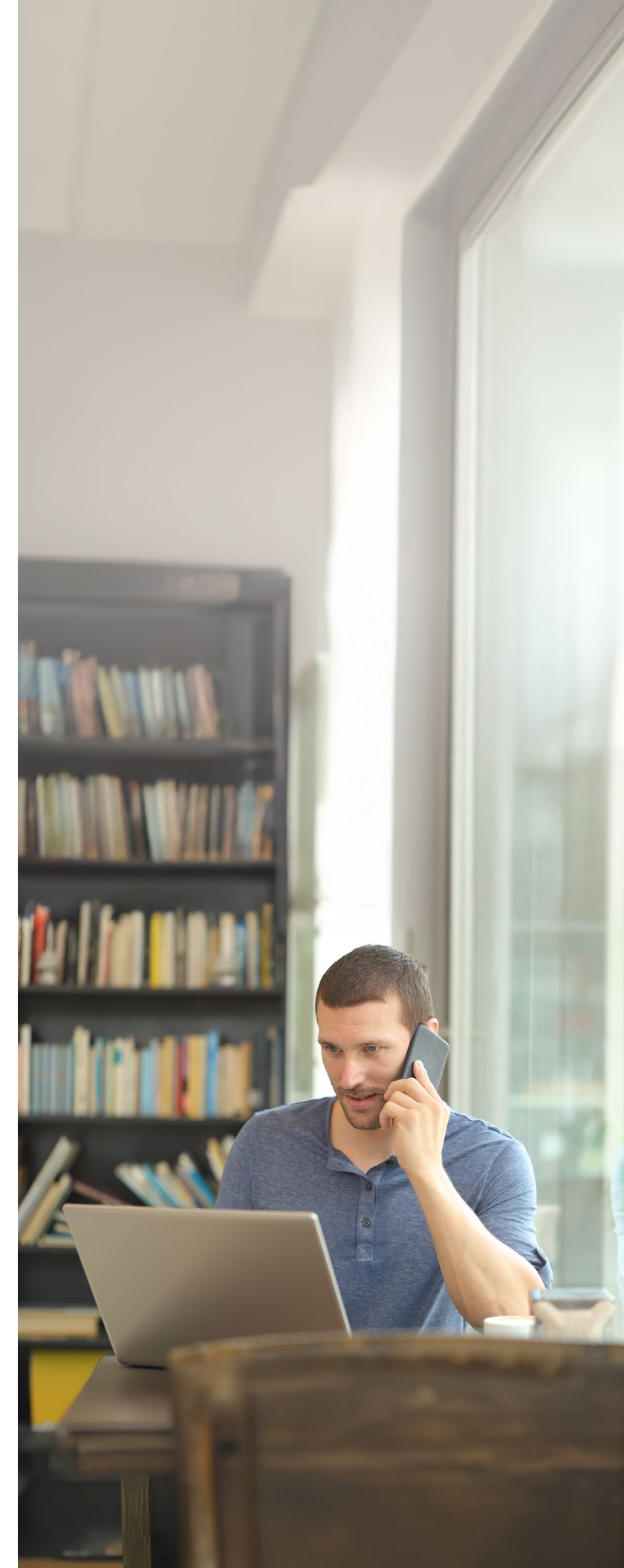
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About the Author

Originally from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, **Jonathan Schultz** earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Aeronautics from Liberty University. He is currently pursuing his CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ (CFP®) certification. [Read More..](#)



The Top Ten Reasons HR Compensation Professionals and Executives Won't Pay—And What You May Be Able to Do About It (Part 1)

WRITTEN BY: CHRISTOPHER M. BROYHILL, PH.D., CAM



I've been asked multiple times to put some of my rambling comments from my feed on LinkedIn into a more formal article. Of late, I've been musing about the rationale that HR compensation professionals use to justify not raising compensation levels when aviation managers meet with them and try to increase compensation levels for their personnel. That leads me to my "Top Ten List" of reasons that HR compensation personnel and flight department executives use to justify making market adjustment to their compensation levels. We won't get to all of them here, but we'll discuss the first three and get to the remaining reasons in subsequent articles.

1) We haven't lost anyone. Why should we pay more?

This is probably the reason I hear most frequently. The lack of vision communicated in such a statement is astounding. It prompts me to think of a similar statement. "We haven't had an accident yet. Why do we need to pay for a safety management system?" In any situation related to people or operations, it is always better to be proactive (or even predictive) than to be reactive. The loss of one person is costly from both a morale and financial perspective, and it is always cheaper to pay people more and retain

them than it is to replace them—ALWAYS! Then there is the impact of a new, unknown personality on the organizational dynamic to consider. A company or department that is willing to roll the dice on this matter is not one with a healthy culture.

I have multiple clients who check in with me on an annual basis to ensure their compensation levels are competitive because they want to stay ahead of the market rather than lose someone to it. They understand this equation. Beware of organizations that do not.

2) We're not competing with the airlines!

I actually heard this from the head of HR comp for a company based at the CLT airport! Seriously? Sigh. Yes, you are. You just refuse to accept it. Every flight department in the U.S. is competing with the airlines, either directly or indirectly. If you lose personnel to the airlines, that's a direct loss. If you lose personnel to an operator across the field because they lost personnel to the airlines, that's an indirect loss.

Yes, there will be ebbs and flows in the hiring rates from the airlines, particularly with aircraft delivery delays, but the demand will always be there in some form. Have you traveled commercially lately? The airports and the jets are packed.

In 2017, I did some research about why business-aviation pilots were leaving for the airlines. There were two major findings from

that study. The first was that the primary reason pilots left for the airlines was for a more predictable quality of life. Close behind was compensation. The second finding was that pilots leaning towards an airline departure were a statistically distinct group from the pilots who were not. The two groups thought differently on every major retention issue. So, in practically every flight department in the U.S. right now, there are personnel who have quietly filed applications with the airlines and are waiting for a phone call. You just don't know who they are.

Can business aviation pay as much as the airlines do? Probably not and they shouldn't try. What they can do is pay enough to show their people that they matter, give them a workplace where they are a name and not a number, and give them a culture the airlines can't match.

3) We can't increase the compensation for these people! They're already at the top of their pay band! Our hands are tied!

If you're an aviation manager in a large corporation trying to go to bat for your employees, you've undoubtedly heard variations on this one, sometimes accompanied by grunts of exasperation and impatience.

To be fair, in my journey to attain the CCP credential, I learned a lot about how base-pay structures are developed, and that process can be long and tedious, making HR professionals

very reluctant to amend them. The biggest limitation from which base-pay structures suffer in a flight department context is that they typically focus on internal equity in the various pay grades, i.e. putting A&P mechanics in the same band as computer technicians or pilots in the same band as subject matter experts or individual contributors in other corporate areas. In so doing, HR is not accounting for different market factors in the different job fields that might be in the same pay band. This can get particularly limiting when some “hot skills” jobs, like pilots, have market pressure forcing compensation upward at a rapid rate.

I would argue that trying to fit flight-department jobs into standard corporate base-pay structures is a lot like trying to force a square peg into a round hole, but it is still a common practice, nonetheless.

There are several ways to deal with raising compensation levels for employees who are at the top of their respective bands but command higher compensation due to market pressures. Here are a few.

1. Incorporate end-of-year lump sum payments into their compensation packages, therefore not raising their base pay but still getting them to the higher number.

2. Increase variable compensation elements, short-term or long-term incentive payments to keep base pay constant but still get to the higher number at the end of the year.
3. Design a unique pay structure for the aviation department that isn't tied to other job titles at a similar “level” in the company but instead is keyed to market compensation levels.

In my consulting work, I encounter this phenomenon frequently and my advice to the comp people usually incorporates these recommendations, and I emphasize that the third one is the most effective.

Regardless of how companies deal with the pay-band issue, the fact is that they MUST deal with it. Relying on pay-band limitations to constrain compensation levels and making no effort to address the situation is a morale killer for employees and eventually they will leave. Count on it.

Next month in this column will be more from the top ten. Stay tuned.



About the Author

Dr. Chris Broyhill is an industry veteran with over 40 years in aviation. He graduated from the United States Air Force Academy in 1982, served with distinction for over 20 years in the Air Force and flew multiple aircraft. [Read More...](#)



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Dr. Tamera Holmes - Aviator and Pathway Creator

An extraordinary legacy
and a mission that continues

WRITTEN BY: SARINA WILLIAMS

“**S**he liked doing the hard stuff. The challenge was what drove her. If you told her she couldn’t do it because it was difficult or that it was rarely, if ever, done; that was like putting a battery in her back to figure out how she was going to crack the code.” As Jeremy Holmes, described his wife, her life, her career, and her dreams, it was evident that Dr. Tamera Holmes was always a determined individual.

Tamera was one of seven children born to Jimmy and Tanya Butler in Maywood, Illinois. They instilled in Tamera and her siblings, grit, drive, and determination to help navigate an environment that was not always kind.¹

When asked how they met, Jeremy shared that they would always say they never met because they always knew each other. They couldn’t have met any earlier having both grown up in their church, Miracle Revival Center in Maywood.



Dr. Tamera Holmes (back) rode with new pilot, Michael Hogue (right) and Flight Instructor Ken Rapier (left), during a flight coordinated as part of the AeroStars program. When Tamera was 16-years old, Rapier piloted her first flight during an event hosted by the Chicago chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen. // NBC Nightly News, 2018

Teen Turned Aviator

Tamera recounted the story of how she was introduced to aviation in an episode of [“Do the Damn Thing” with Laura Foy](#). Growing up, she saw her community decay from a middle-class neighborhood into what she called, “the hood.” She related to “doing the damn thing” because as she put it, “That’s what I literally had to do every day.”

I had to do the damn thing to get up, get dressed, and get out of the house. I had to do the damn thing at school as well. I got my first job at 12 or 13. I was giving my paycheck to my mom. Balancing school and life was really hard. I had to choose whether or not school was going to be the pathway for me. Or I could have been an extraordinary “street salesman,” if you know what I mean. It came to the point where—true story—I got into a huge fight, and it turned into a brawl. The police came and everybody ran. And I’m like, ‘I’m not

running. This person tried to attack me after school.’ Well, because I didn’t run, I was put in the back of the police car. I heard a voice say to me, ‘It doesn’t matter how smart you are now, does it?’ I was a straight-A student in the backseat of a police car and couldn’t keep myself out of trouble.

Soon after, my mom—she was one of those parents that wouldn’t let me sleep in on Saturdays—she would tell me, ‘You need to get up and do something with your life.’ She was always surprising us with, ‘Get up, get dressed, and get in the car.’ This was one of those Saturdays.²

That Saturday, when Tamera was 16-years old, her mother Tanya, took her to Meigs Field Airport in Chicago to check out an event hosted by their local chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen. Pilots were giving children in the community a chance to fly. Tamera took her first flight with pilot Ken Rapier, and it was a

life-changing experience. In a 2018 interview with NBC, Tammera describes the experience with a smile, “All of these black guys, giving free rides to kids, and I’m like, ‘No way.’ This cannot be real; this cannot be Chicago.”³ It was that day when she made the decision to pursue a career in aviation.

After graduating high school, Tammera enrolled at Southern Illinois University to study aviation flight and aviation management. Immediately, she took to the skies with ease. After only four weeks of flight training, she was one of the first in her class of over 200 to fly solo in the aircraft⁴ After going further into school, as she planned her life, Tammera chose to focus on aviation management. She knew she wanted a family and more freedom with time than would be allotted as an airline pilot. She fell in love with airports, and she fell in love with the business side of aviation. Tammera completed her bachelor’s degree in aviation management and Spanish.⁵

Her Career Takes-Off

While attending Southern Illinois University, Tammera interned with the Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA) at O’Hare and Midway International airports where she received hands-on experience with airport operations and safety. Then she interned with United Airlines where she furthered her experience with aviation safety, operations and visited Boeing’s wide-body aircraft manufacturing plant.

After college, Tammera was hired with Landrum & Brown, a leader in aviation consulting and airport planning. She started as an aviation consultant where she gave numerous presentations and wrote technical reports about deicing, energy supply, airport use of natural resources, solid waste and hazardous material use and disposal, alternative fuels, retrofit technology and Green Initiative sustainable design.⁶ After five years, she was promoted to business manager and project administrator for Landrum & Brown’s Chicago office. She managed multi-million-dollar projects, coordinated marketing, reviewed contracts and proposals, and oversaw government compliance. Tammera’s career had taken off. So, what was next?

With every personal accomplishment, Tammera acknowledged those who helped pave her path and remained mindful of how she could contribute to paving paths for others. She didn’t want success just for herself; she wanted to inspire others. She wanted to help underserved communities find pathways to success. It was a dream that never went away.

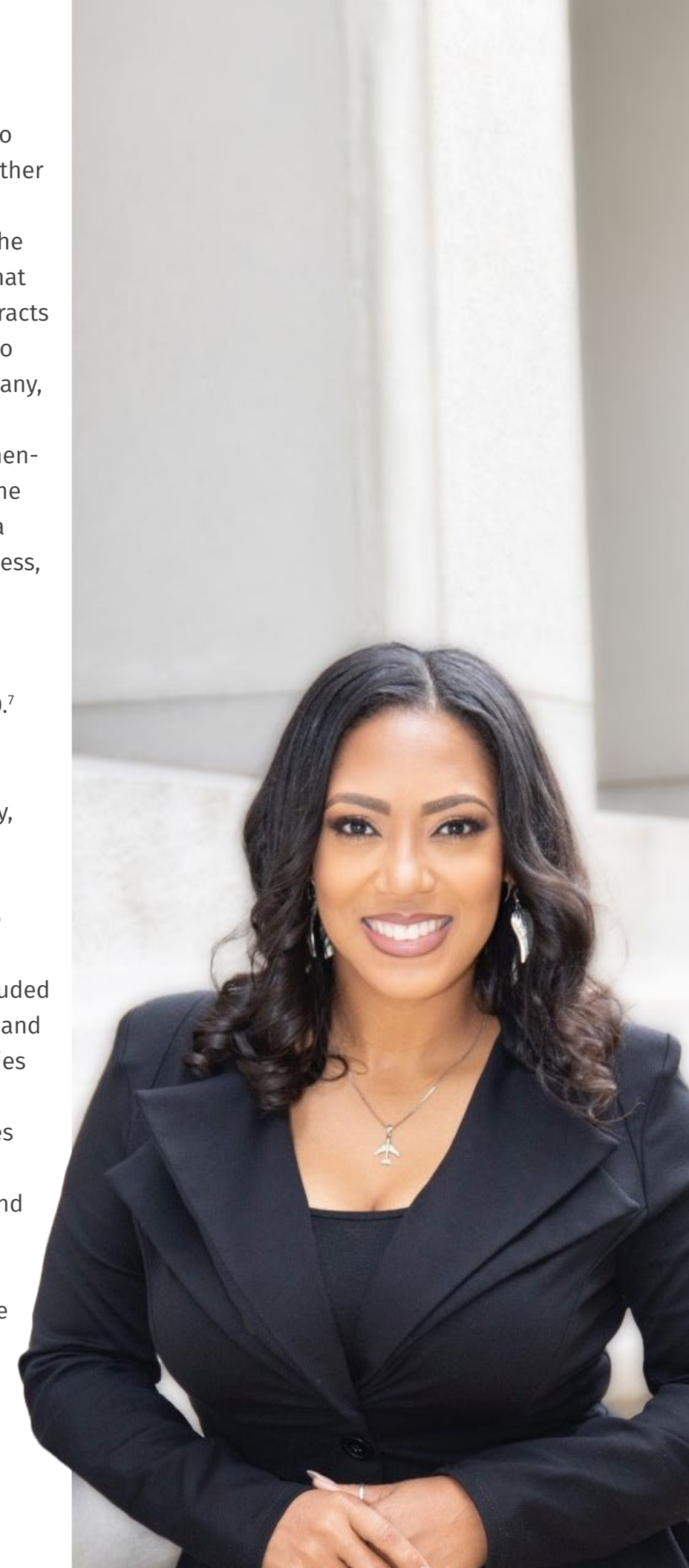
In the “Do the Damn Thing” interview, Tammera described this point in her career. “I hit a glass ceiling at the age of 28. I already had the second-largest office— a corner office with a view. The only person with an office bigger than mine was the vice president who headed up the branch. There had never been a woman or a person of color in the C-suite in 50 years at that firm.”

So, I had to make a choice. Am I going to stay at this company or go look for another job? I was doing all of the minority and woman-owned business reporting for the firm, and I realized that we had goals that we needed to meet on \$10 million contracts that weren’t being met. And so, I went to my boss and the president of the company, and I said, ‘You’re looking for minority businesses, and you’re looking for women-owned businesses to be able to meet the goals of this government contract. I’m a woman and a minority. If I start a business, would you support me?’

Their answer was yes. And my very first contract at 28-years old was for \$97,000.⁷

Though she had a full plate already, with the encouragement of her husband Jeremy, Tammera Holmes went for it once she was able to find a window of time after homeschooling their first daughter for the first year of her education. In 2008, she launched AeroStar Corporation which included aviation consulting as well as mentorship and leadership programs. She helped companies develop meaningful relationships with academic entities within their communities which led to an unprecedented pace for growth of highly qualified young people and minorities within corporate America.⁸

Tammera Holmes shared, “I was one of the first women of color in the world to own and operate an aviation company.”





Tamera Holmes delivering her 2017 “I Get Kids High” Ted Talk // Tammeralholmes.com



Dr. Tamera Holmes with AeroStar Avion Institute students // AeroStar Avion Institute

“Giving Wings to Dreams”

Following the successful launch of AeroStar Corporation, Tamera founded AeroStar Avion Institute, a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing the capacity for a sustainable aviation-talent pipeline. This is achieved through strategic partnerships, sponsors, donors, and grants.⁹

“Giving wings to dreams” became the tagline for AeroStar Avion Institute, which was a phrase that Tamera used often. She dedicated her life to opening doors for women, at-risk youth, and people of color—people she knew well but rarely saw in the aviation classrooms and companies around her.

In addition to running a company and a non-profit organization, Tamera spent countless hours speaking at public events to raise awareness to the need for resources and conduits to inspire underserved youth and help launch their careers. One major event that propelled Tamera’s mission was a Ted Talk she delivered. Naming her talk “I Get Kids High,” the provocative title grabbed attention and served as a tagline for her mission. Tamera went into detail about the importance of stimulating the minds of all

children. She broke down brain chemistry and shared the awe that children and teens exhibit after experiencing flight. She showed that when children experience a healthy “high” and see pathways forward, they have a much better chance of avoiding the unhealthy temptations of drugs and violence. Tamera also explained how this type of pipeline program addresses concerns over pilot shortages.

Since then, Tamera Holmes spread her message through a variety of channels including, NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt, The Steve Harvey Show, on ABC, FOX, PBS, and in Forbes. She received numerous accolades including the 2023 Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award presented to her by President Joe Biden. She was also bestowed an honorary doctorate degree in Christian Humanities for her work in marketplace ministry (aviation business and education both in the U.S. and abroad) by The School of the Great Commission.¹⁰

The Mission Continues

On December 1, 2024 at age 46, Tamera Holmes passed away after a hard fought battle with ovarian cancer. She leaves an extraordinary legacy; she’s touched the lives

of so many and helped children and teens become successful aviators. In her segment on NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt in 2018, footage of children after their first flights shows the looks on their faces that convey an awakening. Beyond the coolest roller coaster they’ve ever seen, they process that this is a real pathway toward a fulfilling career. In the video, 20-year-old Michael Hogue shares that he already has his pilot’s license adding, “I tell Mrs. Holmes all the time that she changed my life.”¹¹

Tamera’s husband, Jeremy Holmes, a seasoned founder and CEO of his own companies, has stepped in as president of AeroStar Consulting Corporation to continue his wife’s mission; creating pipelines for underserved students, women, people of color, and at-risk youth. To discuss how you can support this mission contact Jeremy at jholmes@AeroStarCorp.com. To make donations to AeroStar Avion Institute, visit www.AvionInstitute.com.



About the Author

Sarina Williams is the layout designer for Aero Crew News and the creative director for Riza Marketing. She earned her BA in Advertising/Public Relations from the University of Central Florida. [Read More...](#)

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