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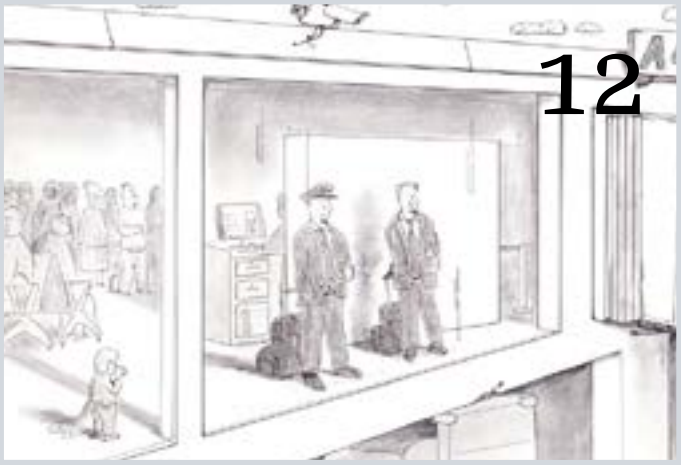
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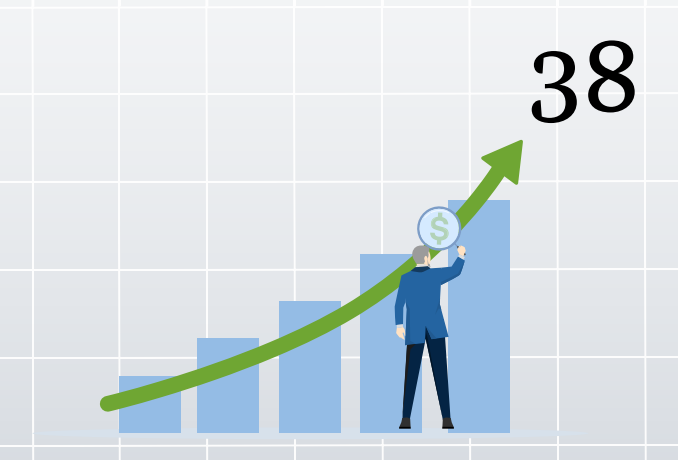


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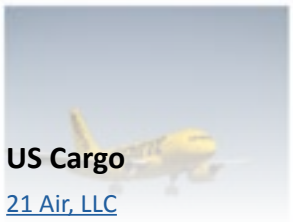
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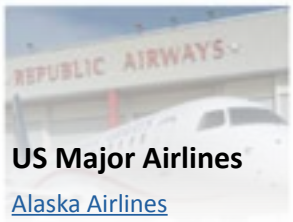
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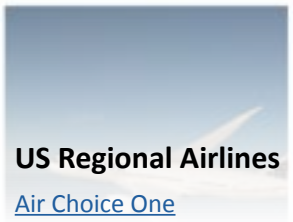
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The Grid (contract comparisons, pay charts, company details, etc.) has moved online. Click on the airlines above to go directly to that airline's information, or go to www. AeroCrewNews.com/go/thegrid.

Dear readers,

It's hard to believe that December is already upon us and as we look back, we see that 2024 has been another stellar year for Aero Crew News as we continue to grow and evolve. We just launched our branded clothing line with some truly great aviation sayings applied to creative artwork. Please check them out at http://AeroCrewShop.com. Christmas, Chanukah and everyone's birthday is coming soon!

Recently, we shared a post on our social media regarding aircrews being denied loyalty benefits at Marriott properties. It sparked some serious debate among our readership. Airline crew spend about half of each month, or more, on the road and they consider hotels their homes-away-from-home. Lately, many crew members have been denied status from hotels where they have earned loyalty benefits. This controversy is not about earning points for our stays on the company's dollar, but about being denied the benefits (earned in one's own right) when staying at a Marriott on the company dollar. I've experienced this myself. One concerned pilot has started a petition aimed at Marriott urging change. Click below to read more and sign the petition. Marriott has been contacted for comment. We'll be sure to share their reply. If you'd like to sign the petition, follow this link: https://aerocrewnews.com/Marriott-Bonvoy.

Aero Crew News wishes everyone a joyous and safe holiday season. We'll be back better than ever in 2025.

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.

November 2024

What you may have missed in November

Feature – The Pink Jet promotes awareness of breast cancer in a unique way.

Aero Medical – Learn about The Mental Health in Aviation Act of 2024

Baggage – Improve the effectiveness of learning with tips and tricks.

Business Vector – The current compensation climate explained as are title subtleties.

Fitness – As you layer up for winter, consider the same in your fitness routine.

Grey Matter – The "disaster" series continues examining a failed breathalyzer or drug test.

Coffee & Pretzels – Cartoonist Greg has been listening on the flight deck!

Money – How to best prepare for the unexpected hits to your personal economy.

Mortgage – The VA loan is explained in a helpful gouge-like way.

Perspectives – Pilots can offer their skills to help when tragedy strikes.



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CommuteAir Pilots Secure Major Pay Increases and Improved Work Rules in New Contract Extension

Nearly 450 pilots at CommuteAir, represented by the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA), have ratified a two-year contract extension that delivers significant improvements to pay, benefits, and work rules. This agreement is a major step forward in the United Express... Read More



Allegiant Air Teamsters Pilots, O'brien & Zuckerman Practice to Picket In Las Vegas

On Tues., Nov. 12, at 2:00 p.m., Allegiant Air Teamsters pilots, Teamsters General President Sean M. O'Brien and General Secretary-Treasurer Fred Zuckerman will hold a practice picket outside Allegiant's corporate headquarters. The practice picket follows an overwhelming 97.4 percent vote... Read More



Spirit Airlines Pilots Respond to Chapter 11 Bankruptcy Filing

Captain Ryan Muller, chair of the Spirit Airlines unit of the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA), has issued the following statement in response to the Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing by Spirit Airlines. "Today, Spirit Airlines announced their filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy... Read More



Sun Country Flight Attendants to Picket in Minneapolis

On Friday, November 15 [today], Sun Country flight attendants represented by Teamsters Local 120 will engage in an informational picket at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport to demand the carrier come to terms on a fair contract or face a potential nationwide strike. Sun Country flight attendants voted... Read More



From NYC to the ABCs: JetBlue Begins More Caribbean Service with Flights to Bonaire

JetBlue announced the official launch of service between New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) and Bonaire's Flamingo International Airport (BON), with the inaugural flight arriving on the island this afternoon. The twice-weekly... Read More



Frontier Airlines Announces 16 New Routes to Launch Next Year, Expanding Service Across the United States and the Caribbean

Ultra-low fare carrier Frontier Airlines is announcing 16 new routes launching in February and March 2025 across 21 airports, connecting consumers... Read More



Fly Alaska and Hawaiian Airlines from the Pacific Northwest via Honolulu on the most direct routes to Australia and New Zealand

If you're ready to experience a bucket-list vacation to Australia or New Zealand, now is the perfect time to book a flight to the warmth, beauty and excitement of a Southern... Read More



This winter, we're enhancing connectivity to exciting nonstop destinations for adventure and warmth

Alaska Airlines is ready to connect guests from key West Coast cities to vibrant destinations across North and Latin America this winter with ten exciting nonstop routes. Read More



Delta to reconnect New York and Buenos Aires with daily seasonal nonstop flight

Delta is thrilled to announce the return of its seasonal nonstop service between New York-JFK and Buenos Aires, enhancing the connection between these two vibrant cities. Operating until March 29, 2025, this route invites travelers to immerse themselves in... Read More



Ciao Italia! American Airlines to offer largest-ever schedule to Italy in 2025

Start packing for next summer with more flights to Italy on American Airlines than ever before. Beginning May 2025, American will increase flights to Rome (FCO), Naples (NAP) and Venice (VCE). Read More



United Sees Nearly 30% Surge in Travel to European Christmas Markets

United reported bookings to European destinations are up nearly 30% compared to 2019 and up almost 10% versus last year, as more Americans opt to spend their holiday dollars on experiences. According to a recent Deloitte survey, consumer... Read More



Boeing: Air Cargo Traffic to Double by 2043 as Emerging Markets Drive Growth

With a strong air cargo market exceeding pre-pandemic levels, Boeing forecasts continued long-term growth, saying air cargo traffic will increase by an average of 4% per year through 2043. These projections appear in Boeing's 2024 World Air... Read More



Avia Solutions Group Orders up to 80 Boeing 737 MAX Jets to Gear Up Expansion

Boeing and Avia Solutions Group, the world's largest ACMI (aircraft, crew, maintenance, insurance) provider, today announced its first order with the company for 40 737-8s, with the potential to order 40 more later. Read More



airBaltic Receives its 49th Airbus A220-300 Aircraft

On November 5, 2024, the Latvian national airline airBaltic welcomed its 49th Airbus A220-300 jet, registered as YL-ABW, in Riga. This is the third Airbus A220-300 delivery for airBaltic in 2024. It is a part of the 50 Airbus A220-300 which airBaltic has ordered. Furthermore, in November 2023... Read More



Boeing Awarded 15 Additional U.S. Air Force KC-46A Tankers

Boeing will build 15 additional KC-46A Pegasus tankers under a Lot 11 contract award from the U.S. Air Force valued at $2.38 billion. In all, Boeing has 168 KC-46A multi-mission aerial refuelers on contract globally, providing advanced capability advantages for the joint force and allies. Read More

CHRISTMAS EPAULETS





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Thank you for your interest in Christmas Epaulets. John Knutson was a veteran of the United States Army, pilot for North Central, Republic, and Northwest Airlines who lost his battle with stomach cancer in 1997 at the age of 56. John's widow Mary got the idea to start making Christmas Epaulets. The money started to come in and she decided that all proceeds should go to the Chetek-Weyerhaeuser Scholarship Foundation in John's memory as he was a 1959 graduated of Chetek High School. As of 2015, recognizing John's patriotic sense of country and service, all proceeds will be shared between Snowball Express and the CWSF.

All epaulets are made locally and packaging is handled by the students at CW schools.

All profits go to Snowball Express and the general fund of the CWSF.

The Knutson family, CWSF, and Snowball Express, hope that you will bring yourself and many others smiles and happy thoughts with the spirit of Christmas as you wear this reminder of the season as a tribute to our military heroes and their families, a patriotic pilot, veteran, and a great man.

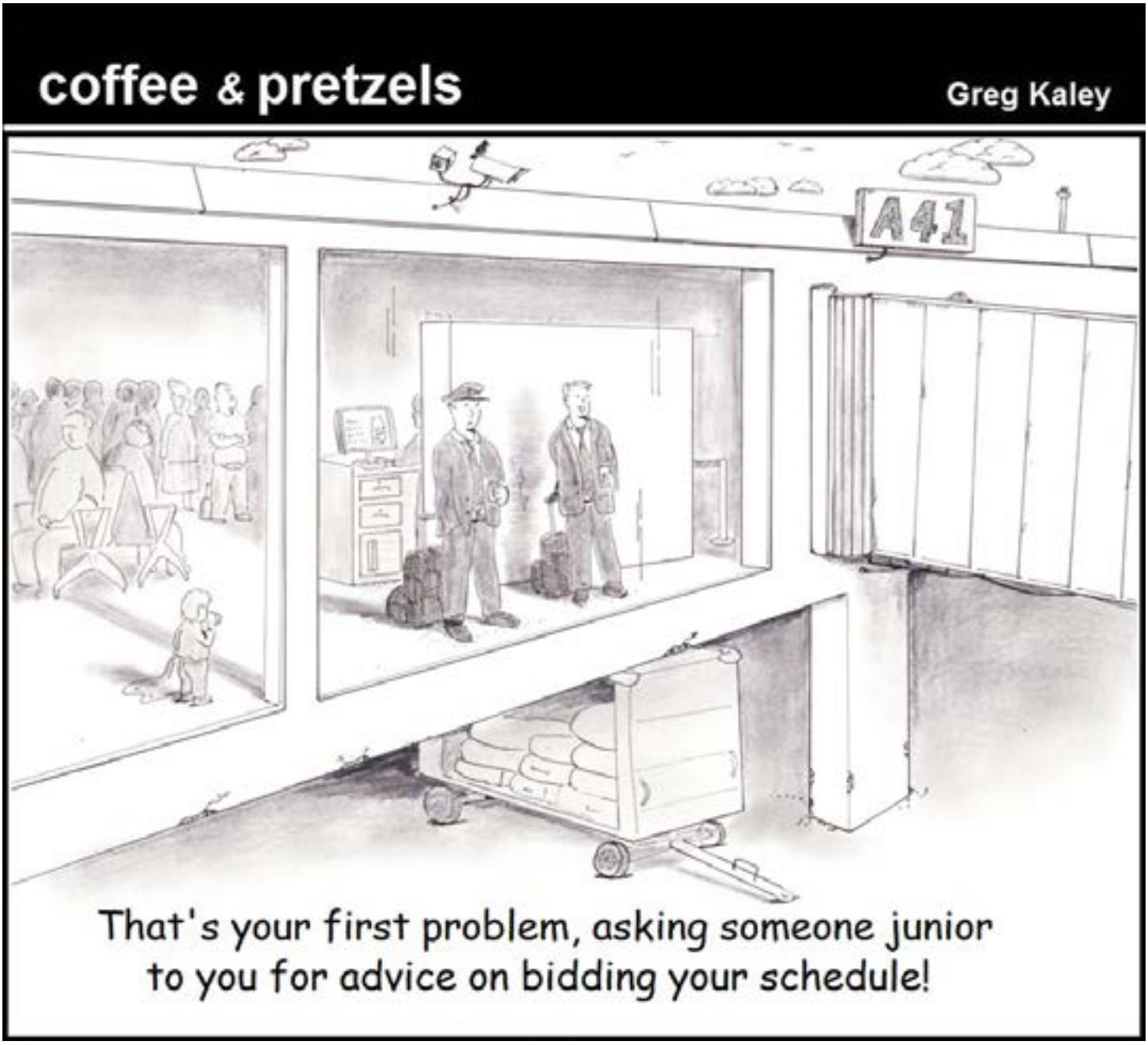
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Christmas Epaulets are available at Crew Outfitters stores at DFW and IAH airports Any questions? Please contact Tim Knutson at *info@christmasepaulets.com*

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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...

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Controlled Flight Into Terrain (CFIT)

Written By: Sergio Sovero

Controlled Flight Into Terrain (CFIT) continues to be an area of concern for aviation safety. The FAA estimates about 17% of general aviation accidents are caused by CFIT. Thanks to safety equipment, such as an autopilot, a radar altimeter, and the ground proximity warning system (GPWS) onboard, it is not a surprise that modern aircraft with two pilots are better equipped to identify and manage terrain threats than a typical single-pilot, small general aviation aircraft.

The threat increases for VFR pilots who attempt to maintain visual conditions in marginal weather. VFR-only pilots are not trained to fly an aircraft solely relying on flight instruments and must understand the limitations posed by the environment in which they are operating. Spatial disorientation and loss of control may result in impacting the terrain, surface, or obstacle while trying to maneuver. In many instances, the aircraft is in perfectly airworthy condition.

Prevention starts with collecting all pertinent weather information prior to flight. Furthermore, pilots must possess knowledge of the minimum safe/sector altitudes and highest terrain in the area. Relying on ATC is not an option, given that the majority of VFR flights are not in contact with ATC. To become aware of the minimum operating altitudes, proper charts and approach plates (valid and current) for the intended flight must be

carried onboard. This applies to IFR pilots as well. VFR charts, although not required, should be onboard because they can provide important obstacle and terrain data for an IFR flight.

In this context, mountain flying is a challenge to any pilot without prior experience and is directly correlated to CFIT accidents. It is highly recommended that one find a qualified and certified flight instructor for a local area training check prior to a mountain flight. The terrain in itself poses additional threats such as strong winds, turbulence, and density altitude degradation on aircraft performance. VFR flight operations may be conducted at night in mountainous terrain with the application of sound judgment and common sense. Given the lack of visual contact with the terrain, night mountain flying increases the risk of CFIT. For aircraft equipped with terrain onboard systems, situational awareness can be greatly enhanced if properly utilized. Pilots must carefully follow any airport-specific, obstacle departure procedure (ODP), and utilize all available resources to make the go/no-go decision prior to flight.

Finally, not all obstructions originate from natural terrain. Antennas, buildings, towers—all significantly affect flight safety. Pilots must understand any operation below 2,000 feet above the terrain poses the risk of CFIT. These may be difficult to see even in good daylight VFR conditions with unrestricted visibility. Though antennas and towers are depicted on VFR charts, be aware that new towers may not have been printed on your chart, even if it is valid/current. As with antennae, towers, high voltage/power lines or the supporting structures of these lines may not always be readily visible, and the wires may be virtually impossible to see. To sum it up, not every man-made obstacle may be published on aeronautical charts. In this instance, the "see and avoid rule" becomes critical to prevent CFIT when operating close to the ground. Be aware at night, towers may not be lighted. If you don't see it, it does not mean it is not there. Light systems could be inoperative and advertised as a NOTAM.

The best approach to prevent CFIT starts on the ground well before the aircraft is airborne. It encompasses sound preparation by the pilot in command and high levels of awareness of the flight path (both vertical and horizontal). Whether VFR or IFR, each flight has critical flight segments. To a great extent, how the flight segments are planned and handled determines the safety of the flight. Know when to fly—the go/no-go decision. Cutting corners and operating in lower than allowed weather conditions is one of the leading causes of CFIT. The importance of gathering a complete weather briefing and being able to correlate pilot skills and training, aircraft capabilities, and operating environment are key to flight safety.



About the Author

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

The Power of Community in Aviation

Written by: John McDermott

Over the years, I have come to greatly appreciate the power of my communities. Aviation is a great example of that and is a community I am proud to be a part of.

The beautiful part of a strong community is its ability to bring people together over a shared passion, activity, or experience. Regardless of what else is going on, those within a strong community can always connect and bond over their shared experiences.

I am lucky enough to have people around me whom I greatly trust. Years of shared experiences, mentorship, victories, and setbacks have gifted me strong bonds that I know I can count on, regardless of how my opinions may differ from those around me.

If anything, my communities have helped me maintain strong connections with others despite how our opinions may differ. By engaging with others through shared experiences, I have developed mutual respect for a range of people in various stages of life, with unique experiences, and with valuable opinions. My communities have helped me find people who solve problems effectively, who respect everyone as individuals, and who are honest and respectful.

By finding these communities, I have also found people who I know will stand with me in difficult situations. No matter how challenging a situation I find myself in, I trust that I can find a space to be myself, to rest and relax and destress with people and in places where I don't need to worry about judgment.

I have found that being able to rely on people in this way is critically important in the aviation industry. I have stood with colleagues through deaths, unsatisfactory checkrides, and lost medicals. I started flying at the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic as pilots wondered about the future of their jobs. And I know that my mentors, who have years more experience than

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I do, have equally supported their colleagues through a wide range of difficult situations. It is heartwarming to know that, through it all, there is a strong and vibrant community of pilots, cabin crew, ground handlers, ticket agents, and enthusiasts who are so quick to reach out and support one another. In many cases, my close connections have been of significant help getting through tough times.

These sentiments apply to a wide range of people I know. I have encountered few other industries – and hobbies – where people of such varying personal beliefs, social situations, and worldviews have put it all aside to support one another. To me, this is all the more proof that I can trust the people around me with whatever I might bring.

This, of course, is fundamentally a very logical conclusion. After all, for each flight, aviation professionals are quite literally trusting their fellow crew members with their own lives. This is due in large part to how highly-standardized aviation is in the first place. Fundamentally, this standardization provides the basis – the shared language, the common experience – that allows aviation professionals and enthusiasts to relate so well to each other. After all, if we can manage the same situations together, who's to say that we can't share much more?

I am thrilled for my future in the aviation industry, no matter where it takes me. In just a few short years, I have found a group of wonderful people I trust and rely on daily. I am highly optimistic as I consider how I will continue to grow and evolve as my career continues, and I am looking forward to how my community will continue to expand and deepen.



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...

SQUALL LINE

Dissecting the Mach Transition



WRITTEN BY: AJAY RAGHAVENDRA, PH.D.

In the United States, the first jet-powered airplanes that most non-military pilots transition to, are those of the regional airlines or to a light- to medium-sized business jet. The regional airlines are typically flying either the Bombardier Canadair Regional Jet (CRJ) or Embraer E-Jet family, and there are numerous options for pilots to transition into a business jet airplane including single-engine jets such as the Cirrus Vision SF50.

As a relatively new first officer with a regional airline, I was perplexed with the concept of Mach transition during climb and descent. As a general-aviation (GA), fixed-wing, piston-engine pilot/instructor and a turboshaft-powered U.S. Army helicopter aviator, the concept of Mach transition made little sense to me. I wondered why cost-index (CI) -based flight planning and air traffic control (ATC) services at higher cruise altitude referred to a Mach number rather than indicated airspeed in knots (KIAS). For instance, typical Mach transition speeds in the ERJ-175 for climb and decent are as follows: 250-270 KIAS during climb until Mach 0.70-0.75. The assigned Mach number is maintained for the remainder of the climb after transitioning to Mach. During decent Mach 0.70-0.75 is maintained until reaching 250-300 KIAS. Assigned indicated airspeed is maintained after transitioning from Mach to KIAS. For reference, the airspeed limitation for the ERJ-175 is Mach 0.82 or 320 KIAS above 10,000 ft and 300 KIAS below 8,000 ft.

Let us consider the following climb scenario: You takeoff from an airport at sea level and climb to FL410. If a constant indicated airspeed climb of 250 KIAS is maintained from sea level to FL410, the corresponding Mach number is 0.84. This will exceed the ERJ-175's Mach Maximum Operating (M_{MO}) of Mach 0.82. On a similar note, a decent from cruise altitude, even at a relatively constant low Mach number (e.g., Mach 0.6 from FL270 to sea level) will yield 397 KIAS at Sea Level and thus exceed the Velocity Maximum Operating (V_{MO}) of 300 KIAS below 8,000 ft.

Altitude (ft)	Mach Number										
	1	0.95	0.9	0.85	0.8	0.75	0.7	0.65	0.6	0.55	0.5
51000	236	222	209	195	182	170	157	145	133	121	109
50000	243	228	214	201	187	174	161	149	136	124	112
49000	249	235	220	206	192	179	166	153	140	128	115
48000	256	241	226	212	198	184	170	157	144	131	119
47000	263	247	232	217	203	189	175	161	148	135	122
46000	269	254	238	223	208	194	179	165	152	138	125
45000	276	260	244	229	214	199	184	170	156	142	128
44000	283	267	251	235	219	204	189	174	160	146	132
43000	290	273	257	241	225	209	194	179	164	149	135
42000	298	280	263	247	230	214	199	183	168	153	139
41000	305	287	270	253	236	220	204	188	172	157	142
40000	312	294	276	259	242	225	209	193	177	161	146
39000	320	301	283	265	248	231	214	197	181	165	149
38000	327	308	290	271	254	236	219	202	185	169	153
37000	335	315	296	278	260	242	224	207	190	173	157
36000	342	323	303	284	266	247	230	212	194	177	160
35000	350	330	310	291	272	253	235	217	199	182	164
34000	358	337	317	298	278	259	240	222	204	186	168
33000	366	345	324	304	284	265	246	227	208	190	172
32000	374	353	332	311	291	271	251	232	213	194	176
31000	382	360	339	318	297	277	257	237	218	199	180
30000	390	368	346	325	304	283	263	243	223	203	184
29000	398	376	354	332	311	289	269	248	228	208	188
28000	406	384	361	339	317	296	274	254	233	213	192
27000	415	392	369	346	324	302	280	259	238	217	197
26000	423	400	376	353	331	308	286	265	243	222	201
25000	432	408	384	361	338	315	292	270	248	227	205
24000	440	416	392	368	345	321	299	276	254	232	210
23000	449	424	400	375	352	328	305	282	259	236	214
22000	458	432	408	383	359	335	311	288	264	241	219
21000	466	441	416	391	366	341	317	293	270	246	223
20000	475	449	424	398	373	348	324	299	275	251	228
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16000	511	484	456	429	403	376	350	324	298	272	247
15000	520	492	465	437	410	383	356	330	304	278	252
14000	529	501	473	445	418	390	363	336	310	283	257
13000	538	510	481	453	425	398	370	343	315	288	262
12000	548	519	490	461	433	405	377	349	321	294	267
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10000	566	537	507	478	449	420	391	362	333	305	277
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3000	633	600	568	536	505	473	441	409	377	346	314
2000	642	610	577	545	513	480	448	416	384	352	320
1000	652	619	586	554	521	488	456	423	390	358	325
0	661	628	595	562	529	496	463	430	397	364	331

Table 1: Calibrated Airspeed in Knots (KCAS) corresponding to different altitudes and Mach numbers assuming the U.S. Standard Atmosphere of 1976.

The table shows Calibrated Airspeed (*KCAS*) for different Mach numbers and altitudes. For the ERJ-175, it is reasonable to assume KIAS≈KCAS. The table shows that if a pilot selects 270*KIAS* and Mach 0.70 as the transition speed, transition altitude from KIAS to Mach is approximately FL290. Similarly, a selection of 270*KIAS* and Mach 0.75 as the transition speed yields a Mach transition altitude of FL320. Intriguingly, the relationship between KIAS, KCAS, Equivalent Airspeed (KEAS) and Mach number does not depend on air temperature since air density changes at a given flight level (pressure level) and has been accounted for in the calculation and conversion. However, deviations from standard temperature impacts true airspeed (KTAS). The higher the density altitude, the faster the KTAS. For example, Mach 0.75 at FL300 yields 446 KTAS at -40C, and 456 KTAS at -30C.

During climb, the transition from KIAS to Mach implies a reduction in indicated airspeed with altitude and results in a steeper climb gradient since altitude is gained at the expense of airspeed (i.e., trading altitude for airspeed or kinetic energy for potential energy). During decent, the transition from Mach to indicated airspeed decreases the true airspeed (KTAS) and thus promotes a steeper decent gradient. However, this idealization is often not observed since the decent gradient is typically held constant (e.g., 3.0°) if vertical navigation (VNAV) path mode is selected.

References

Airspeed Conversions (CAS/EAS/TAS/Mach) by AeroToolbox.com



About the Author

Ajay Raghavendra is an ERJ-175 first officer with a regional airline who pilots the UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter as an aviation officer with the U.S. Army (New York National Guard). He holds a Ph.D. in Atmospheric Science from SUNY-Albany and graduated with honors... Read More...

GREY MATTER

Disaster on the Road, Pt. 12

Global Pandemic

Written By: Richard Swindell

Just over five years ago, on Thanksgiving Day 2019 in the crew room, one of the Grey Matter authors was speaking with a few pilots who had just returned from China. One of the pilots casually remarked that on the return segment, screeners at the airport dressed in biohazard suits had been taking passengers' and flight crews' temperatures before allowing admission to the departure gate area. This was met with a light chuckle and a "whatever" kind of group shrug.

We had no idea what was coming.

Thank you for being with us this year and for checking in for our last article of our yearlong "Disaster on the Road" series. We are of course covering pandemics for this last installment—because, dare we say it, there is a strong possibility it will happen again.

Though not much happened in the U.S. from Thanksgiving 2019 through mid-March 2020, parts of Europe, including Italy, Spain, The Netherlands, and Switzerland had already instituted widespread closures and lockdowns. As the U.S. finally moved to do the same, flight schedules and crew pairings quickly deteriorated, literally overnight, into an absolute mess of cancellations, reroutes, deadheads, unscheduled overnights, aircraft swaps, and general confusion. Everything eventually ground to a near complete halt as most airlines drew down to a meager 10% of total flight operations.

By mid-April into early May, flight crews parked thousands of aircraft all over the country on airport taxiways, ramps, and in the desert. Maintenance personnel plugged engines, covered up landing gear and tires, taped up doors, panels, windshields, and pitot-static ports to protect them from the elements for the duration of the mothballing. Crews deadheaded out on the remaining flights or even left by car to get back to base or home. Airports across the world became ghost towns.
Although, to some degree, day-to-day line



operations continued at most carriers, it was typically only the top ten or twenty percent of the pilot group who actually flew during this time—except cargo pilots who had more work than they could handle. Everyone else was sitting at home trying to embrace an uncertain future.

For those who were flying, and because cleaning supplies and PPE were in short supply at the beginning of the pandemic, the TSA relaxed liquid and gel restrictions for crewmembers so larger-than-normal quantities of cleaning and sanitizing supplies could be brought in—if they could even be found. Eventually, most airlines were able to secure a stockpile of these supplies and provide them to their crews. As it became available, carriers also began disinfecting cabins by utilizing electrostatic spray mechanisms between flights, coating all interior surfaces with an antimicrobial cleaner and disinfecting agent, installing high-efficiency particulate absorbing (HEPA) air filters, and even using ultraviolet-c (UVC) radiation lights for flight deck sterilization.

Mask wearing was of course required when at the airport, on company property, and in hotel vans and common areas, but for pilots (as supported by FAA policy), once on the flight deck with the door closed, masks typically came off. It is difficult and tiring to talk across the flight deck with a surgical mask on and it makes for muffled communications on frequency. Further, in the event that crew oxygen masks had been needed during a flight, and when seconds count, many pilots did not like the idea of fumbling to remove a face covering before getting their oxygen masks in place.

Pretty much all cabin services were suspended a couple of weeks into the shutdown, and even snacks, water, and coffee disappeared for a while. Other than looking after the basic welfare of the few passengers on board, the flight attendants found

themselves without much to do other than hand out alcohol wipes and pick up trash.

As for overnights, not only did local restaurants close down, but hotel restaurants closed as well. Suddenly, crews found it difficult to find food. Some convenience or grocery stores were open, but most were closed. In some locations meal-delivery services were available and take-out options became increasingly common, but early on, crews were packing as much food as possible and calling scheduled overnight hotels in advance of arrival to check on food availability. In addition, most hotels closed fitness rooms and other public areas, thus offering little more than the room itself for overnighting crews, who were often the only hotel occupants anyway. In many cases, hotels themselves closed requiring airlines and union hotel committees scrambling to find suitable crew accommodations.

For many crews, once enjoyable international overnights suddenly became displeasing due to strict requirements to remain in the hotel room for the duration of the stay—sometimes for two or three days at a time. Often, written statements were required to be signed by the flight crew at the arrival airport and at the hotel attesting to understanding that one was not to leave the hotel under any circumstances until the established departure time to return to the airport. Security officers in the lobby often ensured compliance. Some hotels did not allow crew members to have room keys as a measure of preventing them from leaving against host-county statues, insisting under penalty of law that they remain in their rooms. Local authorities were not kidding about this as one FedEx pilot found out in Singapore when he was arrested and imprisoned for a month for leaving his room for a few hours while on an overnight.

In some cases, airlines arranged for catering options for crew because of these restrictions, while some simply arranged for their crews to have access to a snack bar at the hotel with an additional stipend to pay for room service, if available. Some airlines' policies were akin to just a shrug and a wish for good luck.

Despite late-summer announcements for widespread furloughs, many airline unions were able to work with their management groups into the fall (and in conjunction with support from the federal government) to reduce or eliminate pilot furloughs. By spring of 2021, everything was returning to normal. Thanks in part to the "pent-up effect," rebound is still occurring, and at this point, most airlines have met or have exceeded pre-2019 enplanement levels.

So, when another pandemic blows our way, what are some takeaways that you should consider and be prepared for?

- Safety – There was, understandably, significant distraction and stress at the time and ASAP reports and FOQA events were off the charts for everyone including ATC; remind yourself and your crew to remain focused. Dedicate five to ten minutes before each flight to talk through

issues and frustrations, then stow it until after the flight is complete.

- PPE – Have a basic supply of personal protective equipment: masks, gloves, alcohol wipes.

- Food – This was probably the biggest initial challenge for many crews. Rapid shutdowns, including airport restaurants, left few if any options for crews still out flying. Quickly secure or pack food that does not require refrigeration or heating – you may not have access to either.

- Accommodations – You might have to find your own when the crew-hotel desk melts down. So have a back-up credit card available and be prepared to spend an uncomfortable night or two in the crew room or airport if everything is closed.

- Transportation – Although it is on the company to ultimately figure out how to get you back home, at some point you might need to get creative and suggest to them some reasonable and reimbursable alternatives.

- Toilet paper – Yes, this was a bit of a temporary problem as people inexplicably cleared out store shelves and hotels sent their housekeeping staffs home. So, pack a role just to be safe—and maybe some paper towels.

- Security – Passengers were nervous, cranky, and sometimes defiant. Be ready for confrontation and be prepared for the police and other personnel usually responsible for handling these situations to be overwhelmed and not readily available to assist.

- Awareness – Stay informed of conditions and requirements for the cities, counties, states, and countries to which you will be flying. There was a lot of inconsistency out there. Sometimes flight crews were exempted as "essential workers," yet sometimes simply treated as a major inconvenience.

- Back-up plan – Yep, what are you going to do if the airline decides to furlough or shut down? This is of course something that does not just apply to pandemics nor is it something to begin thinking about when news outlets are ramping up reporting on widespread outbreaks. Now is the time to start considering now how you could generate alternate streams of income and have a few executable ideas for what you might do when some disruption occurs during the course of your career and you find yourself, either temporarily or perhaps permanently, out of an airline job.

See you in a (hopefully) healthy 2025.



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...

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Navigating Control and Influence in Daily Life



Written By: Reini Thijssen

Day-to-day challenges can weigh heavily on your mind, impacting every area of your life. For example, as a pilot, you face responsibilities from managing complex flight systems, responding to unexpected emergencies, and navigating high-pressure checkrides. These tasks present potential stressors that require your full attention and expertise. Similarly, in your personal life, concerns about family dynamics during a holiday dinner or the unpredictability of traffic before an important meeting can heighten your anxiety.

Effectively managing daily stressors is crucial for your well-being and professional success. Stephen Covey's defined Circle of Control and Circle of Influence provide valuable framework to help you navigate these challenges. This article explores applying these principles to manage uncertainties, support mental health, and foster personal growth, empowering you to thrive on the ground and on the flight deck.

Understanding the Circle of Control and Influence

In Stephen Covey's book *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, the Circle of Control and Influence refers to the areas where you can control or influence outcomes. This includes aspects like your behavior, relationships with loved ones and colleagues, and approach to health and professional development.

For example, if you are stressed about a family gathering, focus on how you communicate and the environment you create rather than worrying about family dynamics. This shift in focus can lead to greater productivity and overall well-being.

Impact on Anxiety

Your sense of control directly affects your anxiety levels. When you concentrate on your Circle of Control—such as preparing thoroughly for an important checkride event and

maintaining a positive attitude—you generally feel more empowered and less anxious.

Conversely, worrying about factors outside your control, like how family members might interact during a holiday dinner or unexpected traffic before an important meeting, can heighten your stress. By focusing on what you can influence, such as creating a positive atmosphere at dinner or allowing extra travel time for that critical checkride, you can tackle these moments with more confidence and clarity, making your experience much more positive.

Control versus Influence

Imagine your family dynamics during a holiday gathering. You can control how you communicate with family members, your approach to resolving conflicts, and your efforts to create a welcoming environment—these are all within your Circle of Control. For instance, you might initiate conversations with empathy or help mediate if tensions come up.

Similarly, when preparing for a checkride, you can control your study habits, practice flights, and manage your nerves. For example, creating a detailed study plan or simulating scenarios can boost your confidence. However, you can only influence—not control—family members' responses or external factors during your checkride, like the examiner's reactions or unexpected setbacks. Recognizing this distinction helps you focus on managing what you can control while approaching external influences with patience and understanding.

Focusing on Your Circle of Influence

By concentrating on your Circle of Influence, like improving communication with your family and preparing effectively for your checkride, you can foster a more positive dynamic. For instance, if tensions rise at dinner, you might shift the conversation to a lighter topic or suggest an activity. In the context of your checkride, staying calm and focused on your prepared responses can help you handle unexpected challenges.

Examples: Circle of Control – Things I Can Control

The Circle of Control is at the center, representing aspects of life you can directly manage, such as your own actions, decisions, and responses. Here are some areas to consider:

- **Health and Wellness**: Control your health by adopting a balanced diet, regular exercise, and routine medical check-ups.
- **Personal Development**: Set development goals and actively seek learning opportunities.
- **Time Management**: Organize tasks and create schedules to enhance productivity.
- **Financial Decisions**: Manage your budgeting, saving, and investing.
- **Goal Setting**: Establish and track personal and professional goals.
- **Hobbies and Interests**: Engage in activities you enjoy to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- **Workplace Attitude**: Maintain a positive and proactive attitude toward your job.

- **Communication**: Manage your communication style to improve relationships.

Examples: Circle of Influence – Things I Can Influence

The Circle of Influence surrounds the Circle of Control and includes areas where you can have an impact but do not have direct control. For example:

- **Family Relationships**: While you can't control how your family reacts to your schedule, you can influence these relationships through open communication.
- **Social Connections**: Stay engaged with friends and participate in community activities to maintain strong connections.
- **Personal Health**: Follow a balanced diet and manage stress to impact your health positively.
- **Work-Life Balance**: Set boundaries and prioritize downtime.
- **Financial Management**: Budget and plan for future expenses to manage finances effectively.
- **Personal Growth**: Pursue new hobbies or skills for personal satisfaction.

Examples: Outside the Circle of Control – Things I Do Not Control

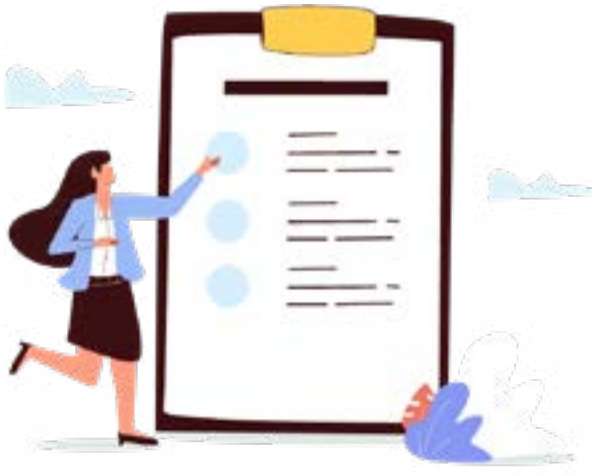
These aspects are beyond your direct management but still require effective handling within the Circle of Influence:

- **Other People's Actions and Behaviors**: You cannot control how others act, whether colleagues, friends, or family.
- **External Circumstances and Events**: Situations like economic conditions or natural disasters are beyond your control.
- **Other People's Opinions**: You can influence how you present yourself, but you can't dictate others' judgments.
- **Past Events**: Events that have already occurred cannot be changed; you can only manage your response to them.
- **Global and Societal Issues**: Large-scale issues like political instability or climate change are outside individual control, though you can influence how you respond within your community.

Final Thoughts

Setbacks and challenges related to our limitations of control and influence can arise in many areas of life, including relationships, work, and personal goals. These situations can feel overwhelming, leaving you unsure how to manage your feelings and responses effectively.

Reflect on this: What recent challenge made you feel anxious, and how could you apply the Circle of Control and Influence to address it?



📝 Exercise: Identifying Your Circle of Control and Influence

Objective: Learn to distinguish between what you can control, what you can influence, and what is beyond your control to better manage stress.

Materials Needed: Pen and paper

Instructions:

1. **Choose a Situation:** Select a specific challenge, such as preparing for a flight evaluation or a holiday dinner.
2. **Create Three Columns:** Draw three columns on your paper and label them:
   • Circle of Control
   • Circle of Influence
   • Outside Your Control
3. **List Your Observations:**
   Circle of Control: Write down factors you can directly manage.
   Example: Your preparation routine, stress management, and adherence to protocols.
   • **Circle of Influence:** List areas where you can have an impact, even if not in complete control.
   Example: Collaborating with your crew and seeking feedback.
   • **Outside Your Control:** Note factors you cannot change.
   Example: Weather conditions and air traffic decisions.
4. **Reflect:** Review your lists and consider:
   • Can you improve actions in your Circle of Control?
   • Are there ways to increase your impact in the Circle of Influence?
   • How will you adapt to factors outside your control?
5. **Develop an Action Plan:**
   Circle of Control: Identify steps to enhance your effectiveness.
   Example: Schedule practice sessions and create a pre-flight checklist.
   • **Circle of Influence:** Plan ways to strengthen relationships.
   Example: Meet with your instructor for feedback.
   • **Outside Your Control:** Prepare strategies to manage these factors.
   Example: Develop contingency plans for weather.
6. **Review Regularly:** Periodically check your action plan and make adjustments as needed to stay focused and resilient.

Resources

Covey, S. R. (1989). The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful lessons in personal change. Free Press.

If you are facing difficulties or seeking to better navigate the balance between what you can control and what you can influence, reach out to Emerald Mental Health. You can email reini@emeraldmentalhealth.com or visit the website at 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...

Navigating Turbulence: A Pilot's Story of Mental Health Recovery and Resilience

Written By: Shannon Torres

The Thrill and Pressure of a Pilot's Life

Starting his career as a Navy pilot, John Smith (name changed for confidentiality) had always felt at home in the skies. "Flying was all I ever wanted to do," he shared, describing memories of seeing *Top Gun* with his father as a kid. It was a career that represented freedom and responsibility. The deep sense of purpose and connection he had with his squadron added to his love for his career. While John's life in the air was incredibly fulfilling, his reality on the ground was a different story.

Facing an Invisible Battle

On the surface, John seemed like any other accomplished pilot, but for much of his life, he had wrestled with an invisible force he couldn't quite control: Anger. "I had a really bad temper before being medicated," he admitted, recalling how even as a kid, it didn't take much to set him off. It felt like an unstoppable current of emotion, making his blood boil and his veins pulse with intensity. In college, his anger would sometimes explode—he went through class rings and even broke computer screens in moments of fury. It wasn't until he hit a breaking point in his marriage that he started anger management, where he began to learn ways to hold back the rage that had disrupted his life and relationships for so long.

Yet, behind this struggle, he felt an intense shame and reluctance to admit to anyone what he was going through. He described how

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the stigma and fear of appearing as if there were something "wrong with him" held him back: "I might not be perfect? What?!" He kept his emotions bottled up, and it wasn't until years later that he fully recognized the weight of carrying this burden alone.

The Turning Point: Seeking Help

After years of feeling trapped in a dark cycle, John was finishing up a tour with the Navy and facing his regular security screen. During the screening, his examiner went down a list of questions. When they got to, "Do you ever feel depressed?" This time, John hesitated. He knew that if he were diagnosed, it would end his flying career with the Navy, but the impact upon his personal life had become too much. It wasn't an easy choice, but he finally made the decision to seek help and said yes. "I reached a point where I knew I had to do something. It wasn't just about me; it was about my kids and wanting to be a good dad." Taking care of his mental health had no longer become a choice; it was a necessity.

As expected, John was immediately finished flying for the Navy. After further evaluation from a psychiatrist, he received a diagnosis of "Dysthymia," also known as Persistent Depressive Disorder. Once diagnosed, he started taking Zoloft and Wellbutrin. These medications, from his perspective, were game-changers. The defining moment was while he was working on his hot-rod car. He was trying to separate a ball joint and had been working on it for 45 minutes. His knuckles were bleeding, his hands hurt, and he was

calmly lying there under the car thinking, "What else could I do to try to get this thing separated?" And then it occurred to him, "Wait a second, why am I not throwing sh*t across the room and punching things right now?!" The medications actually made a difference.

A New Path: The HIMS Program

A little while after this episode, John learned about the Human Intervention Motivation Study (HIMS) program from a fellow aviator. This program connects pilots with AMEs to offer structured support specifically tailored to the needs of pilots managing mental health challenges. John signed up for the program as his goal was to get back to flying, and as he progressed through the program, he began to feel a renewed sense of confidence and control. While the process was, as he described, "... incredibly frustrating and shockingly not covered by insurance," John was happy to have it as a resource. It provided tangible steps forward, finally allowing him to move back toward his career in aviation.

After a 13-month period consisting of multiple Cog-screens, appointments with a psychiatrist, psychologist, AMEs, and multiple back-and-forths via mail regarding documentation, John finally received his medical a week before starting training at a 121 carrier. He has since moved from that 121 carrier to another, and in 2021 retired from the Navy after serving for 21 years. Having regained his footing in both his career and his personal life, John's focus has now shifted from managing his own issues to also sharing his experience with others.

A New Mission: Advocating for Mental Health

Today, John approaches each flight with a new mission: to fly safely AND help others see the importance of mental health in aviation. By sharing his experience, he hopes to destigmatize mental-health challenges among pilots and encourage others to seek help if they need it. "There are a lot of resources out there. I want others to know they're not alone and they can reach out." With that, he knows



that there are still consequences for pilots with particular diagnoses. “Once you throw the word ‘depression’ out there, they are going to take your medical away. It’s going to take six months or more to get it back, so find things to do.”

Even with the potential career impact, he stressed that if a pilot feels they need support, they should definitely go see someone and get the help they need. “It’s going to be better. Don’t try to keep living with an illness that you can mitigate. There are resources out there. It is hard, but in the long run, you are going to be better off if you get the help you need.”

Resources & Support: Taking the First Step

If you, or someone you know, is struggling with mental health, there are resources available specifically for pilots. Consider reaching out to the HIMS program, look into resources from AOPA if you are a member, or explore other mental-health resources specifically designed for the unique challenges faced by those in aviation. Watch this Webinar for more information. There is a path forward, and it starts with seeking help.

If you have any questions or would like to contact the pilot interviewed for more information or assistance with your own journey, please contact the author at Shannon@aviationconversations.com.



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...





FITNESS

Holidays, Vacations and Staying with the Program

Written By: Eric Ray

Welcome to the holiday season!! With Turkey Day right behind us and numerous other religious and secular holidays in front of us for the next month or more, this is still the time to stick with your plan. When the cooler weather hits, sometimes it's easier to stay inside, under the covers, sipping hot chocolate and vegging out to classic Christmas movies. I would ask you to take a few moments and asses where you've been this year and to keep moving your plan forward.

When it comes to holiday parties, or socializing with family, friends and/or co-workers, give yourself a chance to enjoy the season. The trap that negatively affects your program, is taking a day off from working out or ignoring your diet one day, then allowing yourself to ignore it all month long. You should partake in the season and enjoy time with those who support you but be conscious of what you are really doing to your long-term goals if you ignore your plan for too long.

When it comes to vacationing during the holiday season, just stay active. That doesn't necessarily mean that you should be out running or lifting weights (or whatever fitness profile you have), but it does mean keep moving. Think about what activities you can do wherever you go. I recently took a ski trip with family. Walking to the slopes and doing several runs throughout the day allowed me to still burn calories while being surrounded by nature as I actively worked my body without the gym. It doesn't matter where you go, find an activity you can share with your companions and move your body.



Remember, I have always said that sometimes I can get wrapped up in the sweetness that is Christmas goodies. It's okay to eat the dessert, just don't eat the whole pie. A Christmas cookie or two should satisfy but don't give into that whole plate of cookies the neighbor brought over. The same goes for the adult beverage aspect of the season. Have the cocktail or craft micro-brew but be aware of your consumption and always drink responsibly.

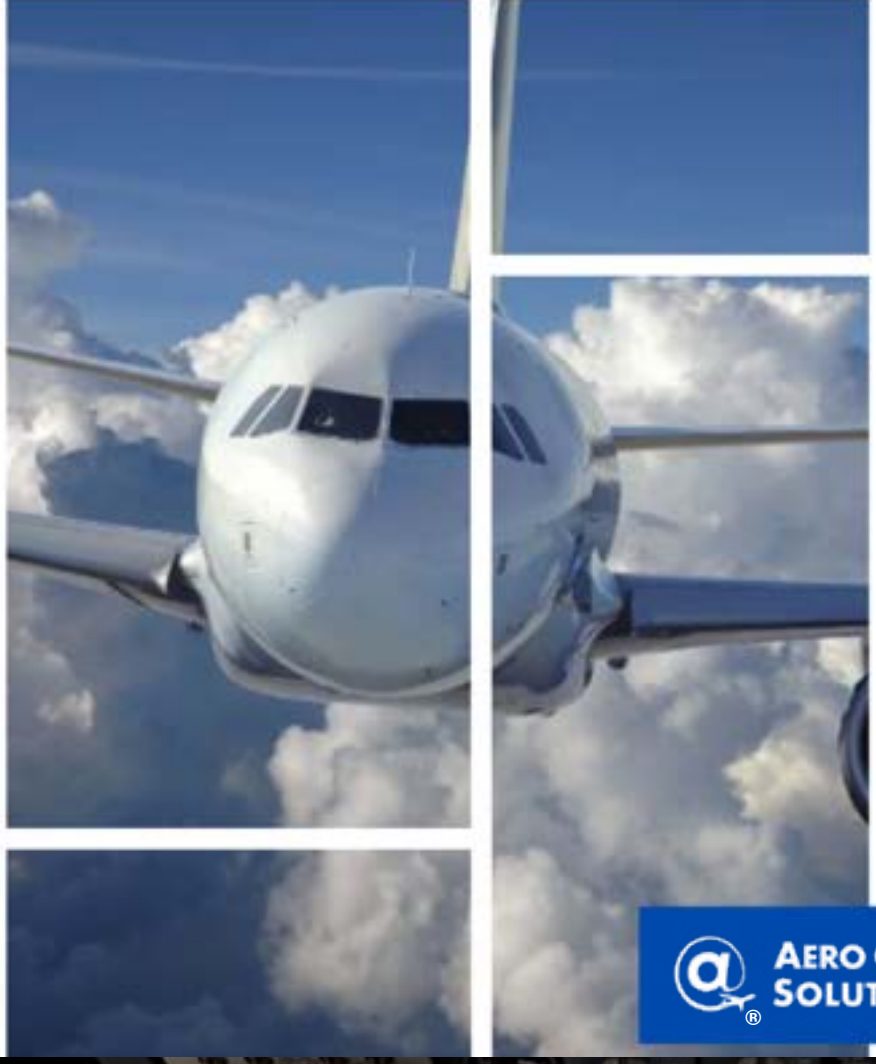
Speaking of drinking—keep your water intake high. Nothing says dehydration more than consuming too much of the other things and not enough water. My theory is to have a glass of water between every cocktail that I consume. The two-fold aspect of this approach is to keep you hydrated, which keeps the hangover at bay and the second is that drinking water helps you stay full, which will slow down the rate you eat or drink.

We are in the hustle and bustle of the holiday season and that may cause you to lose focus. It's okay to get caught up in the festivities and the joy of this time of year. Just realize that everything you have worked for throughout the previous 11 months can quickly be lost if you don't make the effort to keep moving and stay motivated.



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...



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So, I've Got the Comp Data, Now What?

A guide to understanding pay ranges

Written By: Christopher M. Broyhill, Ph.D., CAM

As of this writing, the AirComp Calculator has provided compensation data to thousands of clients, including aviation managers, compensation personnel, and individual business-aviation professionals. Since the Calculator's output depicts the various types of compensation in percentiles and ranges, as depicted in Figure 1 (right), I am often asked for my guidance on which percentiles to target and how the ranges at each percentile level should be used. In the paragraphs that follow, I'll try to provide that.



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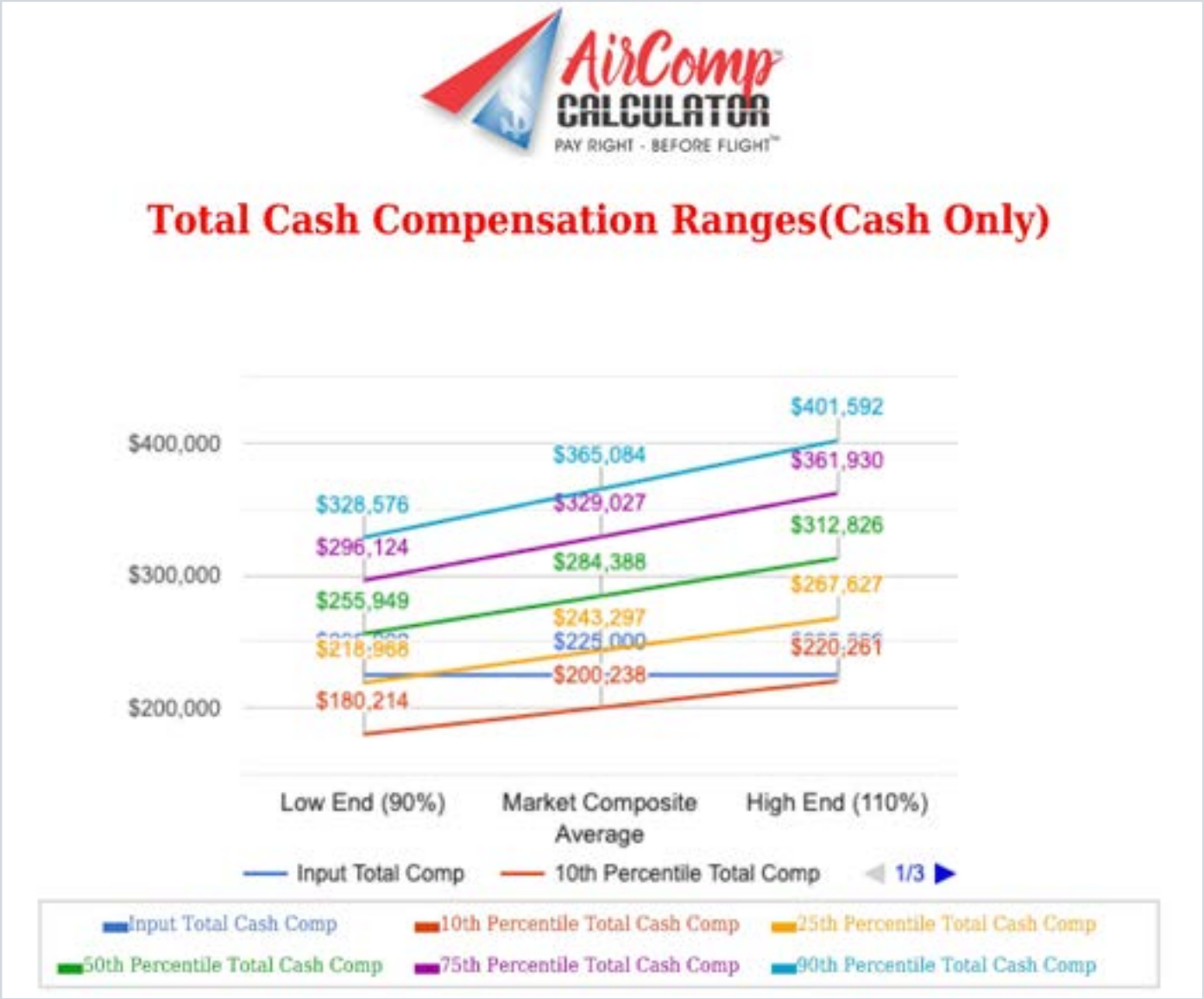


Figure 1 – Example AirComp Calculator Report Page

As a brief review for those of you who are unfamiliar with the Calculator's methodology, we pull values for a given position, in a given weight class of aircraft from multiple scientific compensation surveys, then we age and regionalize each value using both internal survey correction factors and data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The result of this process is the market composite average (MCA) at each of the percentile levels.

What Do Percentile Levels Mean?

Percentiles are used to group data in a meaningful way and it's less about the actual value of a data point and more about where it lies in the dataset. In Figure 1 above, the MCA of the 10th percentile, $200,238, represents a point where 10% of the values in the dataset are lower, and 90% of the values are higher. Correspondingly, the MCA of the 75th percentile range, $329,027, is a point where 75% of the values in the dataset are less, and 25% are more. The MCA of the 50th percentile range, $284,388, is also the median value in the dataset, which means that half of the

values in the dataset are higher, and half are lower. In the compensation business, we like the median more than the mean because the median isn't affected by outlying values on either the high or low side of the dataset.

Targeting Percentile Levels

Which percentile level do we target for pay? That's a function of the organization's compensation philosophy. Certainly, no organization would intentionally target the 10th or 25th percentile ranges if it wanted to pay competitively. Many organizations target the 50th percentile because they want to pay "at market," and the 50th percentile range represents that level. Other organizations pay at the 75th and even the 90th percentile ranges because they are keenly focused on retaining personnel and are willing to pay above the market rate to keep them. In light of the very dynamic personnel market we've had in business aviation over the last several years, I have consistently advised clients to pay at the 75th percentile in order to stay ahead of the market.

Using Pay Ranges

In order to help the user visualize the different percentile levels, the AirComp Calculator generates a range at each level that is 90% to 110% of the MCA. This is a range spread of 20% to 22% depending on the formula used to compute it. This is not the only range spread applicable to positions analyzed however, Range spreads in base pay structures can vary considerably depending on the level of a position in the organization as shown in Table 1.

Position	**Range Spread**
Service, production and maintenance	20% to 30%
Clerical, technical and administrative	30% to 40%
Professional and supervisory	40% to 50%
Managerial and executive	50% or more

Table 1. Range Spread vs. Position (World at Work, 2021, p. 35)

Now, once we decide which percentile range to target and how large the range spread will be around the market composite average or midpoint, we have to decide where in that range we will pay our employees. Or if we're on the other side of that equation, where we think we should be paid. In the pursuit of my Certified Compensation Professional credential, I've taken several

courses on compensation subjects and recently came across the charts that appear below. I'm not sure I've ever seen better depictions/explanations about the use of pay ranges.

There are two ways to approach where in the range to pay, one approach uses career stages and the other uses proficiency and time.

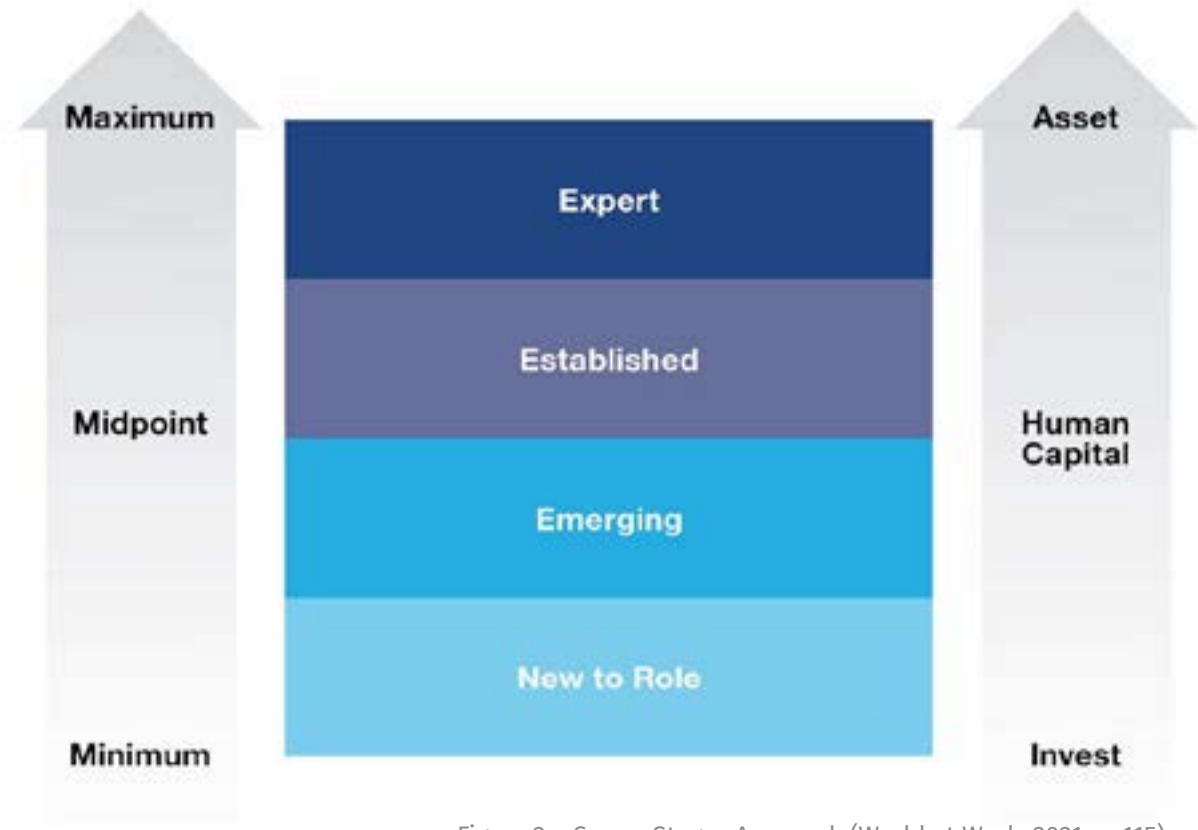


Figure 2 – Career Stages Approach (World at Work, 2021, p. 115)

The Career Stages approach targets pay levels based on where an employee is in his/her career. Obviously, the organization must establish expectations for the different levels. An example of those levels and expectations might be:

- Newly type-rated captain (does not fully meet standards) – little to no experience in type or class of aircraft;
- Emerging (meets standards) – proficient in aircraft and gaining experience; trusted to operate aircraft with company personnel only;
- Established (exceeds standards) – proficient and experienced in aircraft, demonstrating desired competencies and behaviors; productive; using sound judgment; mastering functions, serving as a mentor;
- Expert (consistently outstanding) – highly experienced; may be serving in an informal leadership role; consistently exceeds standards over an extended period of time.

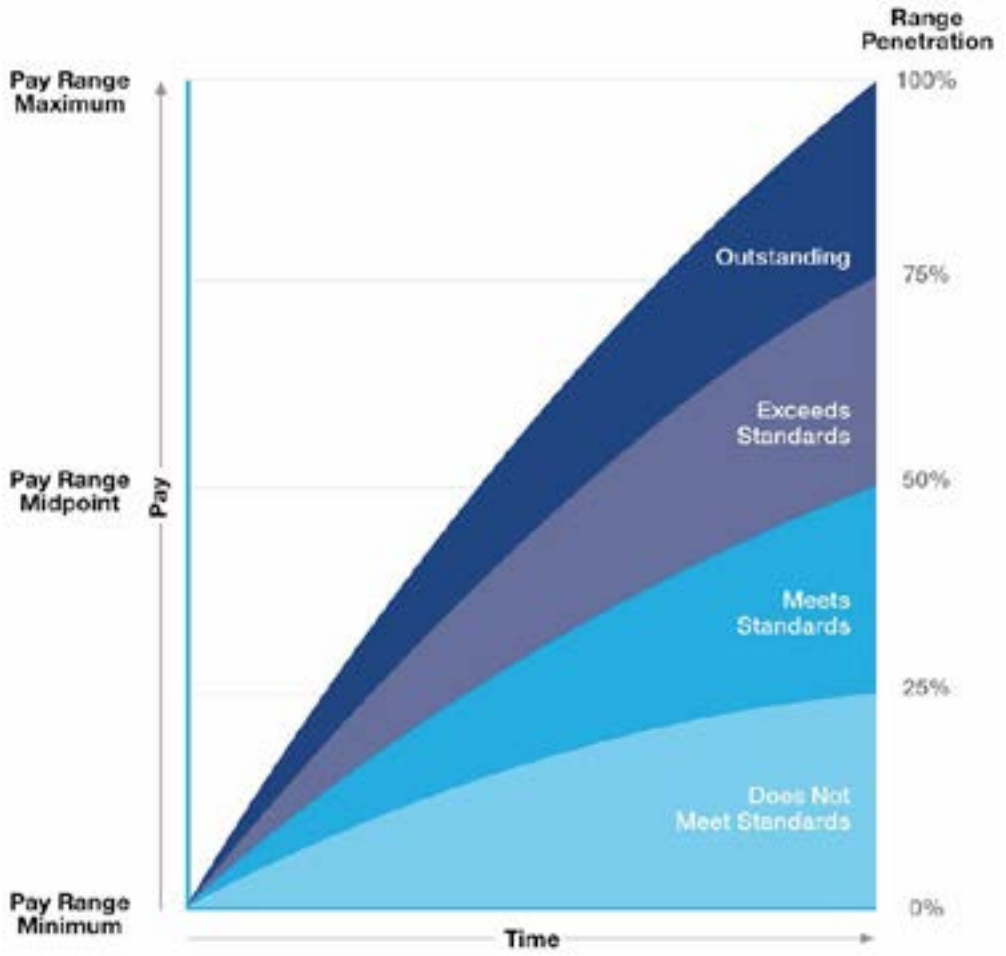


Figure 3 – Proficiency vs. Time Approach (World at Work, 2021, p. 116)

The proficiency vs. time approach weighs an individual's performance at their job with time on the job. Notice that in this approach shows that it is possible for an employee to remain with an organization many years and perhaps never meet standards or perhaps meet but never exceed them. There are two key decisions here:

1. How far should a particular performance level take an employee into the range?
2. How long should it take?

Hopefully, these few paragraphs have enabled the reader to understand a little more about the use of percentiles and pay ranges and perhaps demystify the compensation process somewhat. As always, I'm available for clarification and discussion at drchrisbroyhill@aircompcalculator.com.

Bibliography

World at Work. (2021). Base Pay Administration and Pay for Performance. Phoenix: World at Work.



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...

MORTGAGE

Flight Path to Homeownership: A Pilot's Guide to Buying Your First Home

Navigating the real-estate market with confidence and preparing for life beyond the cockpit

Written by: Jonathan Kulak

Becoming an airline pilot is an impressive achievement, but it comes with its own set of challenges—especially when it comes to buying your first home. The aviation lifestyle often means irregular hours, frequent travel, and sometimes living in temporary accommodations. However, owning a home can provide stability and a sense of belonging. Here's a comprehensive guide to help you navigate the first-time home-buying process as an airline pilot.

Understanding Your Financial Landscape

Assessing Your Income

As a pilot, your income can vary significantly due to factors like flight hours, type of aircraft flown, and additional perks. Ensure you have a clear understanding of your financial situation:

- **Salary:** Review your base salary and potential overtime and/or bonuses.
- **Job Stability:** Consider the stability of your airline, especially in the current market.
- **Debt-to-Income Ratio:** Lenders typically prefer a debt-to-income ratio of 50% or lower. This includes all your debts—credit cards, student loans, etc.

Establishing a Budget

Create a budget that takes into account your variable income. Consider factors like:

- **Down Payment:** If possible, aim for at least 20% to avoid private mortgage insurance (PMI).
- **Closing Costs:** Budget for additional third-party costs, typically 1.5-3% of the purchase price.
- **Ongoing Expenses:** Factor in property taxes, homeowner's insurance, maintenance, and utilities.

Researching Your Market — Choosing the Right Location

Given the nature of your job, your home location can be crucial. Consider proximity to major airports, potential commuting times, and the lifestyle you desire. Research neighborhoods that align with your needs:

- **Commute:** Look for areas with manageable commutes to your base airport.
- **Community:** Choose a neighborhood that suits your lifestyle, whether that's quiet suburban living or vibrant city life.
- **Schools and Amenities:** If you have or plan to start a family, consider local schools and amenities.

Market Trends

Stay informed about market trends in the areas you're considering. Look for indicators of a healthy real-estate market, such as:

- **Home Price Trends:** Are prices rising or stable?
- **Inventory Levels:** Is there a healthy supply of homes for sale?
- **Average Days on Market:** Homes that sell quickly can indicate a competitive market.

Financing Your Home

Be Pre-Approved for a Mortgage

Before you start house hunting, obtain a mortgage pre-approval. This will give you a clearer picture of what you can afford and signal to sellers that you are a serious buyer. Keep in mind:

- **Types of Mortgages:** Explore options such as fixed-rate, adjustable-rate, and FHA loans. Each has its benefits and drawbacks depending on your financial situation.
- **Specialized Lenders:** Some lenders (i.e. Trident Home Loans) cater specifically to pilots and may offer tailored products considering your unique income situation.

Understanding Loan Options

Many first-time homebuyers, including pilots, qualify for specific loan programs that could ease the buying process. Research options like:

- **FHA Loans:** Lower down payment options for buyers with less-than-perfect credit.
- **VA Loans:** If you are a veteran, this option offers favorable terms with no down payment and no PMI.

The Home Buying Process

Working with Professionals

Engage a knowledgeable real-estate agent who understands the unique needs of airline pilots. An agent can help:

- **Identify Properties:** They can pinpoint homes that fit your criteria and are within your budget.
- **Negotiate Offers:** Experienced agents can navigate the negotiation process on your behalf.

Conducting Inspections

Once you find a home you love, don't skip the inspection. This step is crucial to help uncover any potential issues that could become costly repairs down the line. Consider:

- **Home Inspection:** Hire a qualified inspector to assess the property.

- **Specialty Inspections:** Depending on the age and type of the home, consider additional inspections (e.g., pest, mold, or radon).

Preparing for Life as a Homeowner

Balancing Work and Home Life

As a pilot, balancing your work schedule with homeownership can be challenging. Plan for:

- **Emergency Fund:** Build a reserve to cover unexpected home repairs or financial changes.
- **Maintenance Schedule:** Keep a calendar for regular home maintenance tasks to ensure your home remains in good condition.

Conclusion

Buying your first home as an airline pilot can feel overwhelming, but with the right preparation and knowledge, it can be a rewarding journey. By understanding your finances, researching the market, and working with professionals, you'll be well on your way to finding a place you can call home. Embrace the process, and remember that your home is not just a financial investment but a place where you can build a life and create lasting memories. Safe travels on your journey to homeownership!

At Trident Home Loans, we're here to assist you whether you're securing a loan or seeking advice. Contact me at jk@mythl.com or on my cell at 850-377-1114. I'm always happy to help you navigate the mortgage process. Also, check out my previous articles on pilot mortgages available on Aero Crew News.



About the Author

Jonathan Kulak is a Senior Loan Originator at Trident Home Loans, a pilot/veteran-owned/operated mortgage lender licensed in 47 states which is located in Pensacola, Fla. He also holds an FAA Airline Transport Pilot and is a first officer with a major... Read More...



FOOD BITES

Thanksgiving on the Pit Barrel– A Smoked Turkey to Remember

Written by: Victor Soler



When it comes to Thanksgiving, many envision a Norman Rockwellian scene—a golden-brown turkey fresh from the oven, surrounded by sides that could feed a small army. While the traditional roast turkey holds a special place in our culinary hearts, this year I said, “Why not elevate our Thanksgiving feast with a smoked turkey?” If you have a Pit Barrel Cooker, you’re already set up for a mouthwatering masterpiece that will have your guests begging for seconds (and thirds).

Why the Pit Barrel Cooker?

The Pit Barrel Cooker (PBC) is a unique tool that brings together the ease of set-it-and-forget-it cooking with the rich, smoky flavors of a barbecue pit. Its vertical design, combined with the simplicity of charcoal, creates the perfect environment to cook a turkey that’s juicy, tender, and infused with that signature smoked flavor. It’s perfect for pilots like me who crave efficiency and consistency. Simply prep, light the coals, and let the PBC do the heavy lifting while you kick back with a cold drink. If you don’t have a PBC, any pellet smoker will work just fine.

Prep Work: The Key to Success

Smoked turkey success starts with the right preparation. Begin with a fresh or thawed bird (ideally between 12-14 pounds to ensure even cooking in the PBC). The first step? A good brine. Submerging your turkey in a mixture of salt, sugar, and aromatics like rosemary, thyme, garlic, and peppercorns for 12-24 hours will ensure every bite bursts with flavor and moisture.

After brining, pat the turkey dry and coat it generously with a spice rub. For my smoked turkey, I love a mix of paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, black pepper, and a hint of cayenne for a subtle kick.

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Don't forget to loosen the skin and get that rub directly onto the meat—it's the little things that make a big difference.

Into the Pit

The Pit Barrel Cooker comes with hooks, making it ideal for hanging your turkey vertically. Hanging the bird allows heat and smoke to circulate evenly, ensuring perfectly cooked meat and skin that crisps up beautifully. If you're using a pellet smoker, consider the "spatchcock" method. You can find details for doing this online.

Light your PBC using quality charcoal and a few chunks of apple or cherry wood for that sweet, smoky flavor. I always recommend using fruit-bearing trees. Once your coals are ready, hang the turkey in the barrel, close the lid, and let it work its magic. No need to babysit or peek (because if you're looking, you're not cooking) and you'll be rewarded with consistent heat and that legendary smoked flavor.

Plan for around 30-40 minutes per pound, though using a meat thermometer is the best way to ensure doneness. Remove the turkey when the breast reaches 165° F and the thighs hit 175° F. Remember, carryover cooking will raise the temperature slightly after you pull it from the heat. Please don't overcook or you'll end with a dry turkey that is not going to bring you the expected praise.

The Big Reveal

When the turkey comes out of the Pit Barrel Cooker or pellet smoker, it's nothing short of culinary art. The skin will be deep golden with hints of char from the smoke, and the aroma will make it nearly impossible to wait for carving. But wait! You must let the bird rest for 20 to 30 minutes to lock in those juices.

Why Smoke for Thanksgiving?

Smoking a turkey isn't just about the incredible flavor; it's about the experience. The Pit Barrel Cooker or pellet smoker makes the process approachable, even for first timers, and the final product is a showstopper. Bonus, while the turkey smokes, your oven stays free for all those delicious sides, no fighting for rack space.

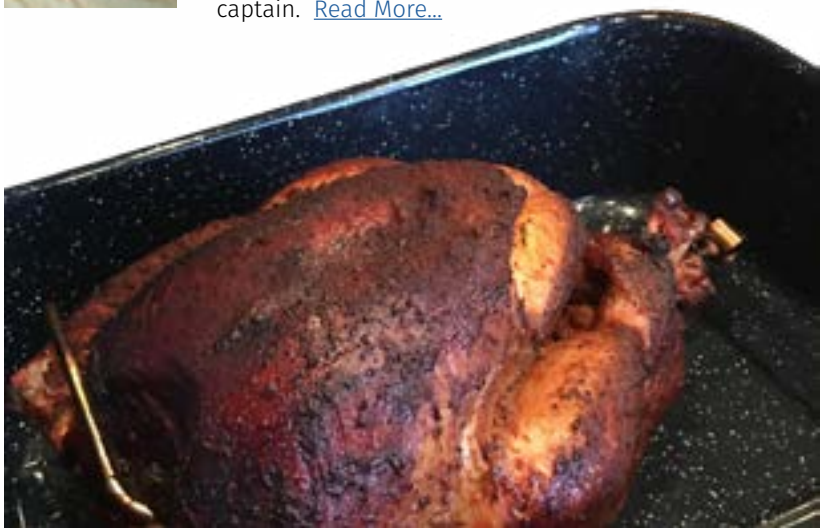
So, this Thanksgiving, I traded the roasting pan for the Pit Barrel Cooker and served up a turkey that's as memorable as the holiday itself. Trust me, your family and friends will be talking about it long after the leftovers are gone.

Christmas is also a great "turkey holiday" so I provide this information in time for you to be a star in your holiday feast. Merry Christmas, all.



About the Author

Victor Soler is a retired Army UH-60 helicopter pilot with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Occupational Safety and Health. Currently, Victor is a 767/757 captain. Read More...





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The Tragic Effects of the FAA's Current Mental Health Policies

Pilots are suffering under procedures that can only be described as coming from the Dark Ages of Mental Healthcare

WRITTEN BY:

October 18, 2021: John Hauser, a sophomore at the University of North Dakota, takes off from Grand Forks International Airport in a Piper Archer. It is a normal solo, nighttime takeoff and landing practice flight. The weather is good, the aircraft has passed its preflight inspection, and John is celebrating passing a recent commercial pilot test. It has the marks of a typical Monday evening training flight. Except this time, John sends a text message to his parents, Alan and Anne, saying he loves them and goodbye.

Alarmed by the odd message, John's parents attempt to text and call his cell phone. No response. Now frantic, they call the Grand Forks airport and receive heartbreaking news. The airport has evidence from their radar that a University of North Dakota plane had gone into a rapid descent and crashed in a field south of Grand Forks. Hours later, it would be confirmed that it was John's plane and that he had perished. Alan and Anne immediately drove to Grand Forks, retrieving letters John had written to them that had been left in his residence. These letters confirmed the tragedy of John's death. He had taken his own life. Admitting to suffering in silence and hiding his mental health struggles from his parents, he feared that if he were to seek basic mental health care and treatment, he would be grounded from flying and kept from a career in aviation. Feeling trapped by the decision of seeking care and subjecting himself to the FAA's mental-health policies or being able

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John Hauser (right) on a hike with friends.

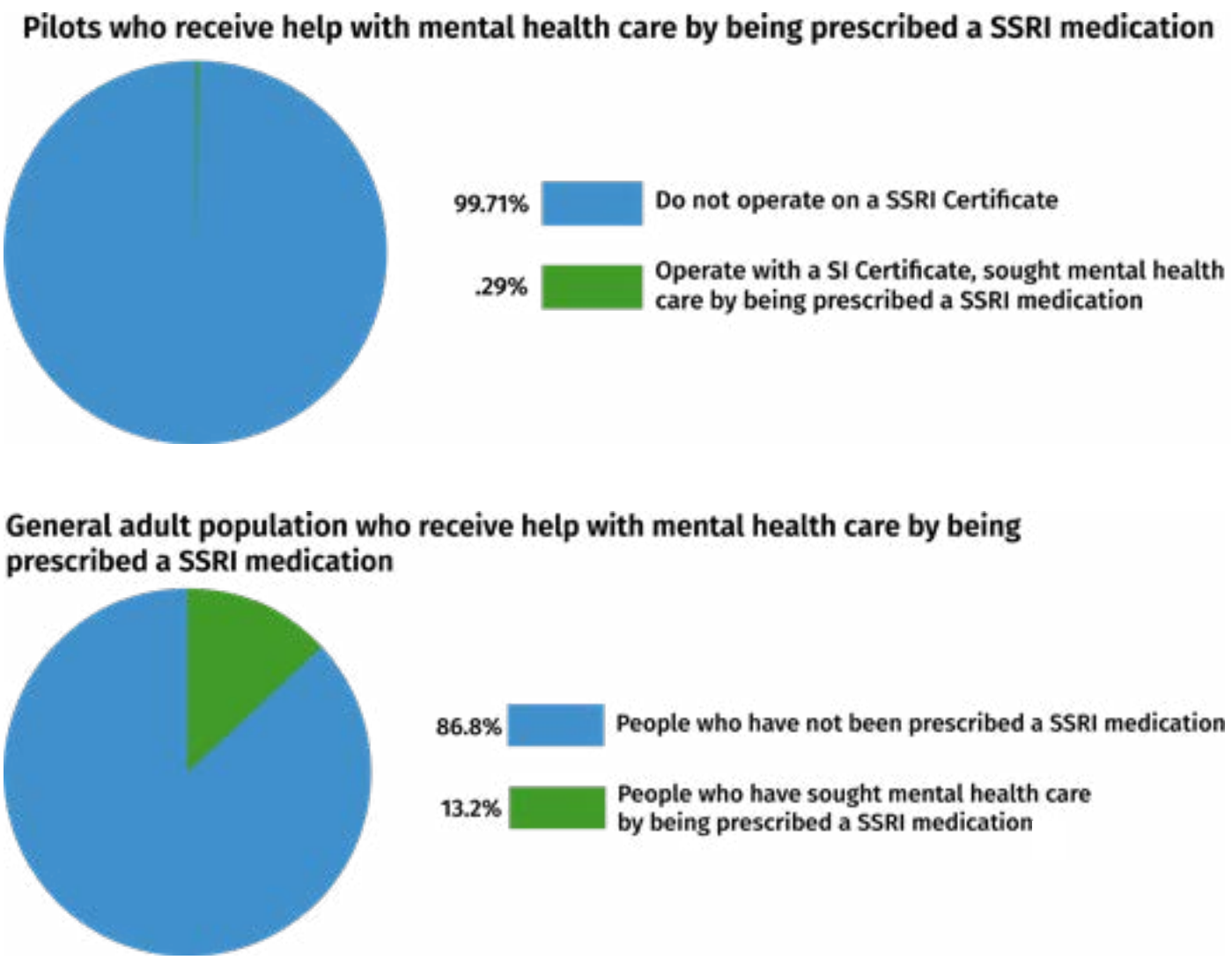
to continue his joy and passion for flying, he posed a request to his parents:

If there's anything you could do for me, get the FAA to change their rules on pilots seeking help with their mental health. I know it would change a lot of things for the better and it would help a lot of people out.

Health Care Avoidance

John's tragic struggles highlight the normalized deviance of health care avoidance in the aviation community. When given the decision to seek basic care, a study conducted by Dr. Billy Hoffman concludes that 56.1% of pilots show behavior in line with avoiding medical treatment, choosing to suffer in order to continue to fly. This issue is magnified when looking at the disparity between genders, with female pilots avoiding health care treatment at a staggering 83.7%.

This avoidance behavior contradicts what mental health professionals recommend for basic mental-health treatment. The FAA, along with research and practical studies, show that the earlier you can intervene in a mental-health condition, the easier and more effective treatments are going to be in returning that person to a normal mental-health state. Basically, the earlier a person can get into talk therapy or onto a prescription drug treatment for their mental-health ailments, the faster that person will be able to return to fly.



The current number of pilots operating under an SSRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) Special Issuance Certificate compared to the SSRI usage to the adult population in the United States is statistically impossible. The most current FAA numbers state that around 500 pilots are currently operating with a SI Certificate. According to the CDC, from 2015-2018 roughly 13.2% of the adult population had sought treatment for mental health care by being prescribed an SSRI medication. That data extrapolated across the roughly 174,000 Airline Transport Pilot certificates in the United States would mean that there should be almost 23,000 pilots who are currently being treated with an SSRI, roughly a 22,500-person discrepancy from the FAA numbers.

Clearly, pilots choose not to seek treatment from basic, proven, and safe mental-health practices. This compounds their issues and can eventually result in a mental-health crisis to avoid the draconian policies and procedures the FAA currently uses to determine if pilots are fit to fly after a treatable mental-health diagnosis. Right now, the skies are safe despite the FAA's policies, not because of their policies.

FAA and Federal Government Response

The FAA consistently states that only a few personality disorders are disqualifying and that ultimately only .1% of the approximately 385,000 annual medical applications they receive are denied certification. This statistic glosses over the reality that pilots experience when they attempt to obtain a special issuance medical certificate for SSRI or NDRI (norepinephrine and dopamine reuptake inhibitors) treatment. These pilots often wait years for the FAA's response to their medical applications after spending thousands of dollars out of pocket on neuropsychological testing, neurocognitive testing, personality testing, and psychiatric evaluations. The pilot's board-certified psychiatrist must treat their mental health for six months and report no abnormalities, be evaluated by FAA approved neuropsychologists and HIMS (Human Interventional Motivation Study) trained psychiatrists, and an HIMS AME must perform a FAA standardized evaluation reporting they deem the pilot fit to fly.

With the awareness that pilots are not seeking mental-health care, the FAA established a Pilot Mental Health Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ARC). This committee, made up of stakeholders outside the FAA, published 24 recommendations for aeromedical reform to the FAA on April 1, 2024. Since then, the FAA has made several small moves to reform the AME Guide to allow for more mental-health treatments to be issued by AMEs in the field. For example, talk-therapy treatment is still reportable to the FAA, but if the case is deemed to be uncomplicated, the AME can issue a medical certificate. Ultimately, the broader call for reform in the FAA has been met with a culture reluctant to make large, systemic change.

These changes however still leave pilots with medically certifiable mental-health conditions waiting years for one of two FAA psychiatrists from the FAA's Federal Air Surgeon's office to clear them to fly. The Air Surgeon has the budget to hire two more staff psychiatrists, but, even by their own admission, this would not clear the backlog. Up to 12 psychiatrists would be needed under their current policies to clear the backlog, and nine would need to remain on staff to keep up with the current mental-health evaluation needs.

Pilot Mental Health Campaign

In the wake of John's death, and as the voices of pilots suffering under the FAA's current system have amplified, in the summer of 2023, a small group of aviators and medical professionals formed the Pilot Mental Health Campaign. PMHC is the first and only nonprofit advocacy group in the U.S. advocating for aeromedical reform directly to federal legislators and policymakers in Washington, D.C. Even in the campaign's infancy, PMHC has achieved success in making pilots' voices heard at the federal level. In December 2023, PMHC participated in the NTSB Safety Summit on pilot mental health, voicing the consequences of the FAA's mental-health system. PMHC board members also



The Pilot Mental Health Campaign lobbying for reform in Washington DC, March 2024.

participated in the Mental Health Aviation Rulemaking Committee, influencing the 24 recommendations made to the FAA. They have also worked with members of Congress to draft legislation, holding the FAA accountable for the aeromedical reforms the aviation community desperately desires.

Through speaking with aviators about the barriers to seeking mental-health care, as well as many of its volunteers going through the special issuance process themselves, the Pilot Mental Health Campaign is actively working towards breaking down the three main barriers that stand before pilots in need of mental-health care—cost, time, and transparency. Far too often, pilots are not being certified due to the extravagant out-of-pocket costs associated with medical certification, the years upon years it takes to reach a final decision from the Federal Air Surgeon, and finally, become so frustrated at the process after being sent letter after letter for documents that are not always published as a requirement for a special issuance by the FAA.

The Pilot Mental Health Campaign's work has only begun. Feeling the pressure from Congress and PMHC, the FAA has changed some of their mental-health policies, including a new ADHD fast-track policy and new guidance for simple talk-therapy treatments pilots may seek. They have also shown increased support for peer-support groups, allowing pilots to talk about day-to-day stressors with their peers, hopefully stopping that stress from becoming a chronic issue. However, the process for obtaining a special issuance medical has still largely been left untouched, leaving many pilots to fight through the costly, time-consuming, and nontransparent process to return to the skies.

Is it Going to take an Act of Congress?

Members of congress have heard the cries for help from the aviation community and have begun to take action. After hearing John's story, as well as a similar story from one of his other constituents, Representative Sean Casten, of Illinois' 6th Congressional District, has introduced the Mental Health in Aviation Act to the House of Representatives. Co-Sponsored by Representative Lori Chavez-DeRemer of Oregon's 5th Congressional District, this bipartisan piece of legislation has been met with broad support throughout the Aviation Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure in the House. The MHAA would ensure that the FAA is held accountable for the 24 recommendations of the ARC, by placing a two-year timeline on the FAA Administrator to enact those policy changes within the FAA. The MHAA will also establish an annual review of the mental health policies within the FAA, rather than waiting for a tragedy to enact a review of those policies. There will also be a $13.74 million-per-year uplift in the FAA's budget to increase AME hiring and allow the FAA Administrator to clear the current backlog of certificate applications. Rounding out the MHAA will be a budget for the FAA to then enact a communication campaign aimed toward the aviation community, outlining the changes they have made and clearly communicating to all pilots that they can seek mental-health treatment without fear of certificate deferment or professional repercussions.









Alongside the Mental Health in Aviation Act, Representative Casten and Representative Rudy Yakym of Indiana's 2nd Congressional District have introduced the Aviation Medication Transparency Act. This is a simple two-page bill that would require the FAA to publish, maintain, and make readily available the list of over-the-counter and prescription medications that pilots may or may not take to maintain their fit-to-fly status. No longer will pilots have to speak with an AME or seek third-party resources to know what medications can or cannot be prescribed by their primary-care doctors during routine care visits. Simple treatments, like an inhaler for a bad cough after a rough cold, can be researched and discussed with a pilot's primary-care doctor in real time rather than having to delay treatment, research the medication, and then return to potentially be prescribed medication at a later date. This is, yet again, another common-sense fix that should have been available to pilots years ago.

What Next?

The FAA and Federal Air Surgeon have the authority to fully implement the ARC's 24 recommendations, as well as other broad mental-health reforms. This would dramatically change the culture in which the FAA views pilots with basic, treatable, and safe mental-health diagnoses. However, they have been slow to make these changes. Organizations like the Pilot Mental Health Campaign need further resources and greater grassroots involvement from the aviation and medical industries to work with Congress to hold the FAA accountable.

Recently, the Pilot Mental Health Campaign has enacted an action center to build grassroots advocacy and legislative momentum. Directly from their website, you can **input your name and address and have your congressional representative automatically populate. With one more click you can send that representative an email showing your support of the Mental Health in Aviation Act and the Aviation Medication Transparency Act.**

Along with digital advocacy, this spring the Pilot Mental Health Campaign will be heading to the nation's capital to lobby congressional members directly. Building from the 50 volunteers during Lobby Day in 2024, PMHC expects to be even more successful in gaining broad bipartisan support towards mental-health reform. Keep an eye out on social media and email communications for a save-the-date, advocacy training, and other ways to support the campaign for the 2025 Lobby Day.

Together as a community, pilots have shown the need for basic, effective, and safe mental-health care. We have cried out for reforms to make that process take less time, cost less money, and to have a clear, easy-to-access, transparent process published by the FAA. We must keep the pressure on the FAA to continue to update and review their mental-health policies. We must continue proactive advocacy to not have any further tragedies like that which struck the Hauser Family. We must ensure that we hold ourselves accountable to John's last wish; to change things for the better and help as many people as we possibly can.

PILOT MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

WHO WE ARE

Founded in 2023, PMHC is a grassroots 501(c)(4) nonprofit dedicated to improving access to mental healthcare in the aviation community.

The Pilot Mental Health Campaign is the first and only advocacy group dedicated to creating a modern aeromedical system that works for both pilots and passengers.

Thanks to the courage of pilot advocates, our movement is finally shedding awareness on the government-imposed culture of fear aviators face every day. PMHC believes the national airspace is safer when pilots are allowed to receive stigma-free care.

CONNECT WITH US

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BY THE NUMBERS

- 56.1% of pilots "reported a **history of some behavior consistent with healthcare avoidance**" in a study of 3,500 U.S. pilots.
- 60.1% of a sample of U.S. pilots "reported either **delaying or forgoing** medical care for fear of certificate loss."
- The VA recently **shared the health records of over 5,000 veterans** with the FAA. Many of these veteran pilots lost their medicals and are having to reapply because of a treatment or diagnosis they may have received years ago.



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