December 2025

Aero Crew News™

Your Industry Connection





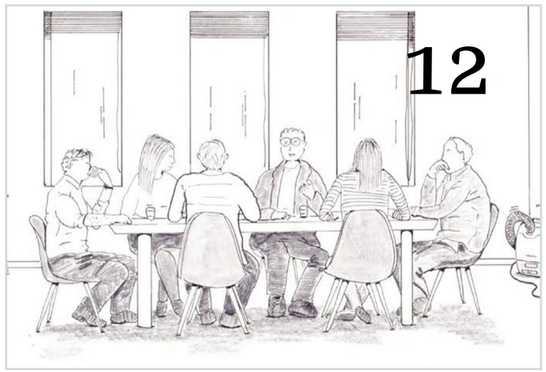


Angel Flight® CENTRAL

contents

December 2025

Jump to each section Below
by clicking on the title or photo.











Also Featuring:

Letter from the Publisher 4
Aviator Bulletins 6
The Value of Walkable Airports 14
Do Passengers Really Want to Hear from Us? 16
New FAA Rule Regarding Falsification or Incorrect Statements 30
Skip the Winter Dip 32
Know Your Booze Clues: Making Informed Choices About Alcohol 36
Preparing for the Annual Compensation Review – Part II 40
529 Plans vs. Prepaid Tuition 44

the grid



PlaneSense, Inc

Add to Compare



JetBlue Airways

Add to Compare



Breeze Airways

Add to Compare



iAero Airways

Add to Compare



US Cargo

[21 Air, LLC]
[ABX Air]
[ATI]
[Alaska Seaplanes]
[Aloha Air Cargo]
[Ameriflight]
[Atlas Air/Southern Air]
[FedEx Express]
[iAero Airways]
[Kalitta Air]
[Key Lime Air]
[UPS]

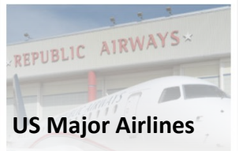


US Charter

[Airshare]
[Alaska Seaplanes]
[GMJ Air Shuttle]
[Key Lime Air]
[Omni Air International]
[Ravn Air Group]
[XOJET Aviation]

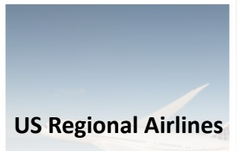
US Fractional

[FlexJet]
[NetJets]
[PlaneSense]



US Major Airlines

[Alaska Airlines]
[Allegiant Air]
[American Airlines]
[Avelo Air]
[Breeze Airways]
[Delta Air Lines]
[Frontier Airlines]
[Hawaiian Airlines]
[JetBlue Airways]
[Southwest Airlines]
[Spirit Airlines]
[Sun Country Airlines]
[United Airlines]



US Regional Airlines

[Air Choice One]
[Air Wisconsin]
[Cape Air]
[CommutAir]
[Elite Airways]
[Endeavor Air]
[Envoy]
[GoJet Airlines]
[Grant Aviation]
[Horizon Air]
[Key Lime Air]
[Mesa Airlines]
[‘Ohana by Hawaiian]
[Piedmont Airlines]
[PSA Airlines]
[RavnAir Group]
[Republic Airways]
[Silver Airways]
[Skywest Airlines]
[Star Mania Air, Inc.]

US Cargo Regional

[Alpine Air]
[Empire Airlines]

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,

Winter is here, well almost and on behalf of the entire Aero Crew News team, I wish you all a happy and safe holiday season. May your days be merry and your trips incident free.

Speaking of trips, I haven't had to deice my aircraft yet, but I have had some significant icing in flight. I'm sure some of you already have had to deice as we saw some significant snow fall in ORD, MKE, MSP and DTW, just to name a few. This is an opportune time to review your company's deice procedures.

This month, we introduce a spin-off series of our Sky Law column. This one is the California edition. Kash Legal has a series of articles specifically related to California law. Their first column addresses The Growing Risk of Drone-Related Aviation Accidents in California. It's a worthy read. While the laws in their cases are California 's, the issues know no state boundaries.

Double check your wings and keep the blue side up (unless you're a stunt pilot).

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 10,000 hours of flying time since his introductory flight on November 14th, 1992.

BACK TO CONTENTS

November 2025

Feature – Learn how BreakTurn is redefining aviation-career mentorship.

Baggage – Learn why you feel less than fulfilled when you reach a milestone. The "arrival fallacy" explains.

Business Vector – What business-aviation professionals need to know going into their annual compensation review.

Coffee & Pretzels – Don't call us working class!

Fitness – The artificial sweetener, aspartame, is examined and now, you can relax.

Grey Matter – More on the mental health debate the impacts pilots.

Knowledge Base – The handling eccentricities of multi-engine light aircraft are explained.

Money – Do you need a financial planner or are you a DIYer?

Mortgage – Avoid the pitfalls that pilots often encounter with lenders who don't understand pilot pay.

Perspectives – Gearing up for training for his first airline gig, the columnist considers all the necessary preparations.



View as Flip Magazine | Download PDF

CREDITS

Publisher / Founder
Craig Pieper

Aero Crew Solutions, CEO
Scott Rehn

Editor
Deborah Bandy

Layout Design
Sarina Williams

Additional Contributors
Greg Kaley
John McDermott
Andrew Ross
Sergio Sovero
Kash Legal Group
Matthew Bulow
Reini Thijssen
Scott Darragh
Christopher Broyhill
Nolan Clark
Jonathan Kulak
Jenna Gerdes

Aviator Bulletins
Provided by the companies listed

Photographs By
Aviator Bulletin photographs provided by the companies listed.
Photographs as noted or licensed by Aero Crew News, LLC

Grid Updates Email
GridUpdates@AeroCrewNews.com

Social Media
Edith Duran

© 2025 Aero Crew News, All Rights Reserved.



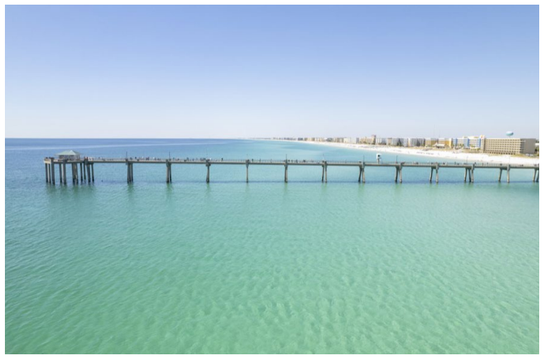
Republic Airways and Mesa Air Group Complete Merger

Republic Airways Holdings Inc. announced the successful completion of the merger between Republic Airways and Mesa Air Group, Inc. The transaction was announced on April 7, 2025 and approved by Mesa stockholders on November 17, 2025. Under the terms of the merger agreement, Republic stockholders now... Read More



Spirit Airlines Reaches Agreements with Pilots and Flight Attendants as it Continues to Advance its Restructurings

Spirit has reached an agreement in principle with its Pilots, represented by the Air Line Pilots Association ("ALPA"), and an agreement in principle with its Flight Attendants, represented by the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA ("AFA")... Read More



Flying Even Further in Florida: JetBlue Announces New Service to the Emerald Coast

JetBlue announced new nonstop service to Florida's Emerald Coast, with flights to Destin–Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS) starting March 5, 2026. The airline will operate five weekly seasonal flights from both Boston Logan International Airport (BOS)... Read More



Spirit Airlines Coasts into the Florida Keys with Launch of Key West Service

The Sunshine State is getting even brighter with Spirit Airlines' iconic yellow planes officially landing at the Southernmost Point. The Florida-based carrier launched the only nonstop service between Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood... Read More



The Golden State Growth Goes On: Book on Southwest for Late Summer 2026

Southwest Airlines Co. extended its schedule for booking through September 2026 – giving Customers more options in San Diego than ever before and new offerings at three airports in Greater Los Angeles. Customers can now book at Southwest.com® Read More



This Giving Tuesday, Donate to LifeLine Pilots to Help Care Take Flight

LifeLine Pilots, a Midwest nonprofit providing free non-emergency medical flights since 1981, is launching its Giving Tuesday campaign to raise $5,000. Thanks to a generous match, every donation made this Tuesday, December 2, will... Read More



Embark on a journey towards Christmas. LOT Polish Airlines launches flights to Rovaniemi

LOT Polish Airlines has inaugurated the holiday season in a truly magical style. 27 November 2025 mark[ed] the carrier's first scheduled flight to Rovaniemi. LOT Polish Airlines invites passengers to board its planes departing for Rovaniemi until 1 February 2026. Poland's national carrier will... Read More



JetBlue Announces New Service from Boston to Barcelona and Milan

JetBlue announced it plans to begin new daily summer seasonal service from Boston to two top European cities: Milan, Italy and Barcelona, Spain. Flights to both cities will operate from JetBlue's focus city at Boston Logan International Airport (BOS). Flights to Josep Tarradellas Barcelona... Read More



A dream vacation in Crete with LOT Polish Airlines! Book a direct flight from Warsaw to Heraklion now

After Athens, Thessaloniki and Preveza Heraklion – the capital of Crete – is the fourth Greek destination in the network of routes operated by LOT Polish Airlines. In view of the region's great tourist potential and the continuously increasing... Read More



JetBlue Expands Industry-Leading Gateway Programs With New Pathway for Aspiring Aircraft Maintenance Technicians

JetBlue announced the expansion of its industry-leading Gateway programs with the launch of Gateway University – Tech Ops, a new pathway designed to create a direct route for aviation maintenance students to join JetBlue as Aircraft Maintenance... Read More



Now Boarding to Belize City: Spirit Airlines Launches the Only Nonstop Service from Fort Lauderdale

Spirit Airlines is taking its high-value service to a new international destination with the airline officially taking off to Belize City (BZE). The carrier will operate the only nonstop service between... Read More



Frontier Airlines Announces Four New Routes Launching in Early 2026, Increasing Affordable Travel Options Across the U.S.

Frontier Airlines will launch four new routes across seven airports early next year, increasing the affordable travel options offered in New Jersey, Florida, Illinois, Utah and Arizona. Read More



Frontier Airlines Launches Its 2026-2027 GoWild All-You-Can-Fly Annual Pass at Just $349 (Regularly $599) for a Limited Time With Special Early Access

Frontier Airlines launched its 2026-2027 GoWild All-You-Can-Fly Annual Pass at a special intro price of just $349* (regularly $599), along with a special, limited-time early access offer. Read More



BermudAir Unveils Expanded Summer Schedule for 2026

BermudAir announced its expanded 2026 summer schedule, offering as many as three dozen flights weekly, now on sale from a record 11 North American gateways. The airline introduced new service from five airports in 2025, including New York's LaGuardia, Newark, Raleigh-Durham, Richmond, and Montreal. Read More



Emirates Orders 65 More Boeing 777X Airplanes

Boeing and Emirates announced the world's largest international airline has placed its third order for 777X airplanes to fuel future expansion and meet growing travel demand. The new order for 65 777-9 passenger jets was announced during a signing at the Dubai Airshow. Read More



Ready, set, Italia! Alaska Airlines opens ticket sales for new nonstop flights between Seattle and Rome on widebody 787 Dreamliner aircraft

Alaska Airlines is now selling tickets to Rome from our expanding global gateway in Seattle – another milestone as a growing global airline. We'll offer daily, seasonal summer service between... Read More



WAI and Harvard University Partner for the Class of 2026 Emerging Leaders Courses

Rising women leaders in the aviation and aerospace industry are encouraged to apply to attend Women in Leadership: A Program for Emerging Leaders, a professional development program hosted by Women in Aviation International and... Read More

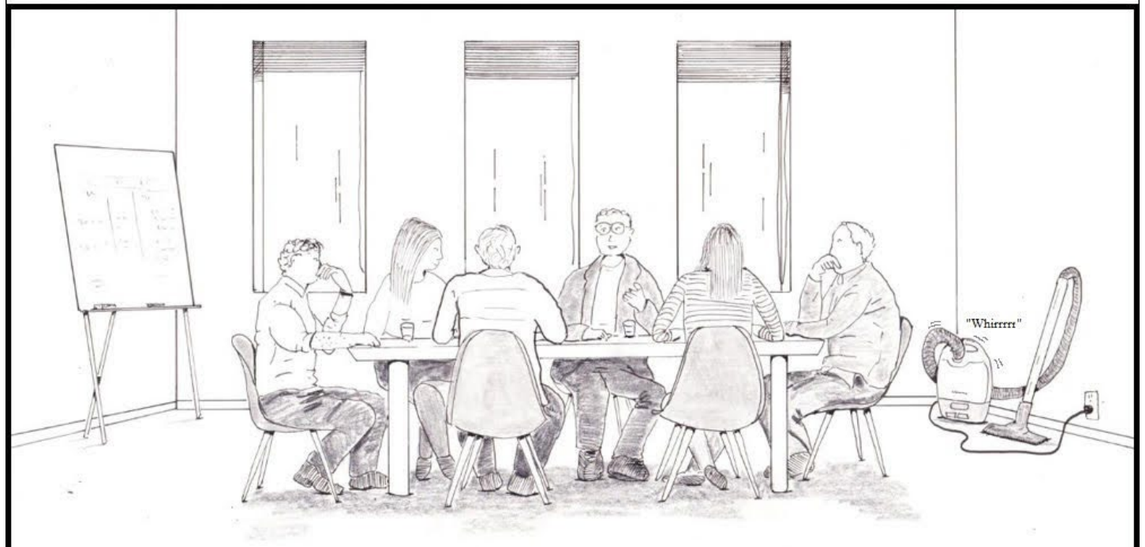


New KC-390 demonstrator, E195-E2, and E190F, lead Embraer's lineup at Dubai Air Show

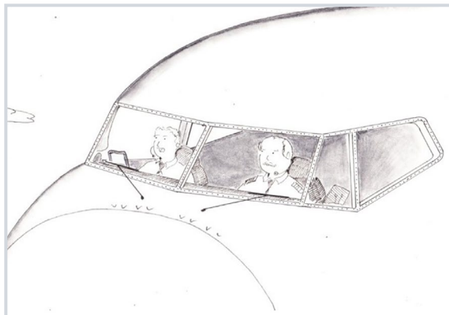
Embraer will showcase for the first time at the Dubai Airshow the new KC-390 Millennium demonstrator with its new paint scheme. The multi-mission medium airlift will be on display with the... Read More

coffee & pretzels

Greg Kaley



This exercise is to build empathy with the pilots. We'll sit for four hours with a vacuum running. Ring a bell to pee. Snack. Solve the world's problems. And talk about how we can do everyone else's job better.



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...



AEROCREWSHOP.COM



The corridor connecting Terminals 1 and 2 at Chicago O'Hare International Airport
Editorial photo credit: Davslens Photography - stock.adobe.com

The Value of Walkable Airports

Written by: John McDermott

Like all flight crew, I spend a lot of time in a variety of airports. After years of working at and passing through many airports, a number of features stand out to me. These features often impact which airports I like more than others, and they can even indicate the age of a given airport or its terminal.

When I chat with travelers, I get a variety of comments about any number of airports. Some people notice how cramped a certain airport is or how long another's security lines; food options, the conditions of restrooms, and the frequency (and severity) of delays also come up as people discuss how much they like or dislike any number of airports.

One feature has stood out to me over the years—how walkable and accessible an airport is. After all, I spend all my time onboard airplanes sitting, which after a time can cause restlessness, so the last thing I usually want to do at an airport is sit. If I have a big open area, after all, why not stretch my legs before I spend hours in a confined space? This is especially true for me during prolonged delays— being able to meander through a changing "landscape" is often an easy way to pass the time.

My first job in aviation was working ramp and customer service for a small commuter airline at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport. With the exception of those in Terminal 5, used by the non-hub U.S. airlines and international operations, you can walk from one gate to any other in Terminals 1, 2, and 3. O'Hare is over a mile long from the tip of Terminal 1 to the opposite tip of Terminal 3 (don't judge; I get bored), but you can walk anywhere within those points.

Some of my fondest memories working at O'Hare, besides watching Air Force One arrive and a few notable sunsets, involve walking to breakfast, snacks, or dinner with coworkers during shifts. The airport's accessibility meant we could pick either a restaurant or a terminal with the best selection and be there within 20 minutes. To this day, I appreciate that I can get around ORD so easily whenever I pass through.

The Philadelphia International Airport is a similar case. I often find myself transiting between Terminal F, where regional flights operate, and the rest of the airport's mainline flights. A shuttle service is offered between terminals, but walking is a viable option. Being able to loosen up and move my legs between long periods of sitting does me a great deal of good, especially transiting to or from long flights along the eastern U.S. coast or even across the country. It's good for me physically and positively impacts my mood.

Chicago's Midway Airport is a similar case, though on a much smaller scale. Midway consists of three concourses in one terminal, making it easy to catch connecting Southwest flights even if they are at opposite ends of the airport.

One airport I often use that breaks this mold is the Orlando International Airport. It arrangement is quite like big airlines' "hub-and-spoke" model of operation—one main central area for check-in, TSA screening, and baggage claim, connected by trams to remote concourses that have a set of gates, restrooms, and a central food court. In theory, each unconnected (except by tram) concourse contains everything a passenger needs, each feels a little claustrophobic. I sense the relative containment compared with other airports' vast walkways.

Orlando's international terminal is a break from the trend of its domestic gates—it is bigger, has more open space, and a lot more natural light. You can clearly tell, though, that it is a much newer facility than the rest of the airport.

Walkable airports offer opportunities to make an airport great. I find it is often the underlying factor that makes airports' other positive qualities possible. As my career continues, I will have plenty more opportunities to test out my opinion and decide how much I continue to appreciate being able to walk around airports.



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...



GREY MATTER

Do Passengers Really Want to Hear from Us?

Weight and balance issues related to PA announcements from the flight deck

Written by: Andrew Ross

Sitting in the back of a hot (and getting hotter) 737 on some remote parking area of O'Hare Airport, I'm getting increasingly agitated. I'm not really sure why. I have no particular rush to get to the gate and get home. I don't have any physiological needs that are becoming urgent. Perhaps the heat is getting to me? No, it's the fact that I have no idea what's going on, and this is increasingly frustrating me to the point where I'm now almost as angry as the passengers I hear around me grumbling "what's going on?" "Did they forget about us?" "Did we land at the wrong airport?" "Is there a security thing they aren't telling us about?" I'm also beginning to have the same questions, but shouldn't I know better? Don't I know, fundamentally, that it's just an occupied gate and the crew just doesn't have any new information to share? So, why do I feel like I'm just another "uninformed passenger?"

No matter which airline you fly for, most will have a common policy of updating passengers every 15 minutes during extended ground delays. On the surface, this makes sense, and most pilots agree that 15 minutes isn't a terrible burden when you're parked doing nothing but monitoring systems. But what often happens on the flight deck, is after one or even two of those updates, the mentality shifts to "well, I have nothing new to add, so I'm just not going to say anything." On the surface, this feels like a descent solution. We type-A-personality pilots only want actionable intelligence and listening to someone drone on and on sounds like excuses and not results. Or the overabundance of updates with no substance will somehow cause more anger than a non-update update.

To be fair, I think all of us would agree that a pilot coming on the PA every minute to give a "non-update" would start to have people eyeballing the emergency exit handles by minute 20. However, we also know that the number one cause of passenger complaints during a delay is lack of any update at all from the flight crew, especially when you are sitting stationary for more than 30 minutes. So, why do people want a non-update at all?

It's all psychological. Flying is inherently scary/nerve wracking for most of the population, whether they travel once a year, or every week. This fear and unease, ramped up after having to deal with driving to and around the airport and then going through security, is amplified by the fact that every passenger must give up control of the situation and trust the flight crew to get them from point A to point B safely. Passengers handle this stress in many ways. Some become overly compliant, some become belligerent, and others "check their brain" at the door of the airport either consciously or with the aid of a narcotic or alcohol. All this anxiety then gets crammed into an aluminum tube for hours at a time in close proximity to many others feeling the exact same way.

Finally, we get to the gist of this article. You and 150ish of your closest friends for the last number of hours are stuck waiting for a gate at your destination. You park, tell them you are waiting for your gate to become available, and 15 minutes pass. It's now decision time—do you give them no update, or do you tell them you are still waiting. While it seems pointless, telling the passengers that you have absolutely no update other than your promise that you will get them to the gate as soon as you can, will help bring the temperature down. Why? Because you are giving them back some control. Even though there really isn't anything they can do, they FEEL as though some control of this has been given back to them. They are no longer on an island trying to deal with this alone, they know the pilots are thinking of them and to some extent, understand their frustration. Some people call that "empathy," and empathy goes a long way in customer relations, and with relationships in general.

Does the 15-minute update have a shelf-life? Absolutely. After an hour, especially if you're late, there really isn't much you can do to keep people happy. However, updates at regular intervals, even if they are "non-updates," will help stave off the worst anger, and buy you and your company time to work out a solution. And don't just take my word for it, as a passenger in the back of the plane, I've seen this happen in a bad way. We landed 30 minutes early on our flight and then proceeded to park in a remote stand at the airport. No PA, no information from the flight attendants, nothing. We wound up taxing to the gate 25 minutes later and arrived right on time. The anger in the cabin, and the angry words from passengers as they walked out, was palpable. The flight arrived on time, and everyone was mad, even me.

The old adage "no news is good news" may apply to circumstances surrounding medical tests, HR complaints, and war. But in this case, whomever originally said that had not been stuck on a remote stand at an airport for 30 minutes with no word from the people in control of their lives.



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...



BACK TO CONTENTS

WE COULD GO ON AND ON ABOUT HOW GREAT OUR UNIFORMS ARE...

BUT WE KNOW WHY YOU'RE REALLY HERE.

ENJOY YOUR EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNT!

CLAIM HERE

We'll let the products speak for themselves.

JetStream



Winter Weather: Freezing Rain, Drizzle and Fog

Written By: Sergio Sovero

Freezing rain, drizzle, and fog are often misunderstood weather phenomena by pilots. As we transition into winter flying, these conditions pose a major threat to aircraft performance.

Freezing rain occurs when a layer of warm air aloft sits above sub-freezing surface temperatures. Snowflakes fall into this warm layer, melt into liquid raindrops, and then refreeze upon contact with cold surfaces. The result is a clear, dense glaze of ice that adheres tenaciously to aircraft surfaces. Freezing drizzle has a similar outcome, although it is harder to detect by radar. Ultimately, freezing fog can lead to ice forming on leading edges, probes, and inlets as the suspended water droplets become supercooled.

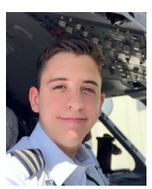
Adhesion of such moisture to sensors, probes, static ports, or inlets can lead to unreliable airspeed and altitude indications, or even power loss if formed on engine inlets. Hence, the importance of recognizing such weather phenomena by observing cues such as temperatures near 0°C, a surface dewpoint within a degree or two, and a shallow inversion layer.

Radar returns, as previously mentioned, may not be present. PIREPs become an invaluable tool for pilots, as other aircraft report real icing encounters. A thorough weather briefing must include temperature profiles, icing potential charts, and AIRMET Zulu areas. Consider alternate routes or altitudes to avoid warm layers over cold surfaces. An in-flight encounter must be addressed promptly by activating anti-ice systems as soon as practical—do not wait for accumulation.

If icing intensifies, pilots should exit the conditions immediately: climb, descend, or turn toward known ice-free air. You may consider declaring an emergency with ATC to receive assistance, particularly when performance is compromised.

Inspecting the aircraft prior to flight requires all flight control and critical surfaces to be free of contaminants. Pilots should request Type I/IV de-icing and anti-icing fluids when in doubt and verify tactilely that critical surfaces are clean before takeoff. Be aware of fluid types and their respective holdover effectiveness times. The FAA publishes fluid holdover times for different precipitation types and intensities for each winter season. It is important to remember that holdover time begins at the start of the anti-ice operation. If a two-step process is used (such as when both Type I and Type IV fluids are applied), then the time begins at the start of the final anti-icing step.

Inherently winter operations involve additional threats and risks for pilots. Preparation starts with diligent preflight weather planning and aircraft inspection. Familiarity with the aircraft's specific operating limitations is imperative. Not all aircraft are certified to operate in known icing conditions due to the absence of anti-icing and de-icing equipment. If your aircraft is certified for flight in known icing, take the necessary steps to prevent accretion and minimize aircraft performance degradation.



About the Author

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



The Growing Risk of Drone-Related Aviation Accidents in California

California's airspace is among the busiest and most complex in the United States. With major airports such as Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), San Francisco International Airport (SFO) and San Diego International Airport (SAN) handling millions of passengers annually, the safety of manned aircraft operations is a top priority. At the same time, the proliferation of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS, often referred to as "drones") for recreational, commercial, and industrial use has created new intersections of risk.

In California, where urban sprawl, dense population centers, and high-traffic air corridors coincide, drone-related aviation safety incidents are an increasing concern. Reports of near-misses, airspace incursions, and drone interference with manned flights are mounting. For individuals or organizations impacted by such incidents, specialized legal guidance is often needed. (Individuals in California affected by aviation mishaps may turn to experienced law firms such as Kash Legal Group for help.)

This article explores the nature of drone-related aviation accident risk in California, reviews key statistics, examines regulatory and technological mitigation, offers legal considerations, and includes testimonials and FAQs.

Drone Incidents and Airspace Risk in California

Rising Numbers of Drone Sightings

According to reporting by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), drone sightings and reported encounters have increased dramatically nationwide and in California. For instance:

- A CBS Los Angeles article notes that reports of drones have "increased dramatically" since 2014.
- The article further states that between August 2015 and January (year unspecified), California alone had **more than 580 reported drone-sightings** in that period.
- Another dataset shows California topping the list of unmanned aircraft encounter reports: 196 reports since May 2014.
- Nationally, U.S. officials reported over 3,000 drone events near airports since 2021, with some occurring in California.
- A report states that as of October 1, 2024 there were approximately **800,000 drones registered with the FAA** nationwide.
- A California state Department of Transportation document shows that from 2006 to August 2023, 27 UAS accidents were reported in the U.S., of which **seven occurred in California**.

Risk Factors in California's Airspace

The high number of drones registered and operating in California increases the potential for near-conflicts with manned aircraft. The document cited above emphasizes that California has one of the highest concentrations of UAS per capita for both recreational and commercial use.

Drones near airports can interfere with approach paths, departures, and emergency air operations (such as fire-fighting aircraft).

A 2025 incident in Los Angeles is illustrative: a drone collided with a fire-fighting aircraft over the Palisades Fire, damaging a wing and grounding a "Super Scooper."

Types of Incidents

- Near-misses: drones inadvertently flying into controlled airspace or near landing/take-off paths.
- Collision with manned aircraft: while rare, have occurred (e.g., the fire-fighting aircraft incident).
- Airspace incursions during special operations (e.g., fire-fighting, medical flights) leading to operational disruption.
- Drone interference causing flight delays or diversions, which in turn can create safety vulnerabilities.

Magnitude & Consequences

The magnitude of these incidents can be extensive in California: given the number of registered drones and the number of airports, even a small percentage of mis-flights can generate a significant number of unsafe events. For example:

- If California has the highest UAS per capita and many airports, it is reasonable to draw a correlation between the volume of drones and the elevated number of encounters.
- The grounding of fire-fighting aircraft as a result of a drone collision underscores the potential for broader public safety consequences.



Regulatory Landscape & California-Specific Considerations

Federal Regulations

Key federal rules include:

- Drone operators must stay **below 400 feet** in altitude, maintain visual line of sight, and avoid manned aircraft.
- Remote identification mandates require drones to broadcast identity and location.
- Unauthorized operations in controlled airspace (e.g., near airports) are subject to fines and criminal penalties.

California and State/Local Considerations

- California's Department of Transportation documentation points out that the state has high UAS registration and usage numbers, making regulatory compliance especially important.
- Local ordinances: In some state parks and highway corridors in California, drone operations are further restricted. For example, launching drones within certain California State Parks is prohibited unless by special order.
- Enforcement: Even with federal and state rules, unauthorized flights—especially near airports or fire-fighting zones—remain difficult to monitor and prosecute.

Penalties & Enforcement Actions

- Civil penalties for unauthorized drone flights can be substantial. For example, interfering with fire-fighting aircraft can result in fines up to $75,000.
- Criminal penalties: Interfering with aircraft during special operations (wildfire suppression) is a federal crime, potentially resulting in prison.

Technology & Mitigation Strategies

Detection and Monitoring Systems

California airports and aviation authorities are increasingly employing technology to reduce drone-related risk:

- Radar and RF (radio-frequency) detection systems at airports to identify unauthorized UAS.
- Geofencing technology embedded in many drones that restrict automatic flight into no-fly zones near airports.
- Counter-drone measures: airports may deploy non-lethal means to neutralize rogue drones.

Predictive and AI-Assisted Systems

Research is ongoing into AI-based predictive analytics that can detect potential collision paths between drones and aircraft, which may alert pilots or ground control in advance. California DOT reports that increased investment in UAS operations has "created new challenges to their safe and scalable integration" and that pioneering research is required.

Best Practices for Operators and Airports

- Ensuring drone operators register appropriately and follow visual-line-of-sight (VLOS) rules.
- Airports should coordinate with local law enforcement and fire agencies on detection and response plans.
- Public education campaigns: many drone incidents result from ignorance of restrictions.
- During emergency operations (wildfire, medevac), temporary flight restrictions (TFRs) must be prominently communicated and enforced.

Legal Implications & Victim Guidance

Liability Considerations

When a drone-related aviation safety incident occurs in California, the following liability considerations may apply:

- Drone operator liability: If a drone violates federal/state regulations, the operator may be liable for negligence, civil damages, and potentially criminal sanctions.
- Manufacturer liability: If the drone malfunctions due to a hardware or software defect, manufacturers or distributors may be held accountable under productliability or negligence theories.
- Airport/airline duty: Airports and airlines owe a duty to implement reasonable safety measures. If an airport fails to maintain detection systems or coordinate with authorities, liability may be asserted (though these cases are complex).

BACK TO CONTENTS

- Insurance & compensation: Victims (passengers, crew, propertyowners, thirdparty individuals) may have rights to compensation depending on fault, regulatory violations, and the extent of damage or injury.

Role of Specialized Legal Firms

Given the technical, regulatory, and aviation-specific complexities of drone-related incidents, legal firms that focus on personal injury and aviation accidents can be critical. (Kash Legal Group, a California law firm with offices in Los Angeles, lists substantial experience in personal injury and negligent-accident claims.)

Why Seek Legal Assistance?

- Investigating technical causes of drone interference (flight data, radar logs, aviation incident reports).
- Tracing liability: who operated the drone, whether regulations were followed, whether detection/prevention systems failed.
- Pursuing compensation for injuries to crew/passengers, damage to aircraft or assets, or operational losses.
- Navigating regulatory enforcement: interacting with FAA investigations, criminal or civil penalties, and protecting client rights.

Case Studies from California

Case A: Fire-fighting Aircraft vs Drone (Los Angeles)

In January 2025, a drone collided with a CL-415 “Super Scooper” fire-fighting aircraft over the Palisades Fire in Los Angeles, resulting in a hole in the wing and temporary grounding of the aircraft. The incident underscores how drone interference can directly impact emergency aviation operations.

Case B: Near-Miss at LAX

Earlier reporting found that a pilot of a Lufthansa A380 approaching LAX reported a drone passing about 200 feet above the aircraft.

Summary Impact

These incidents show the variety of risks: recreational/highhobby drones near airports, commercial drones entering controlled airspace, and critical operations (fire-fighting, medevac) being compromised. The effect extends beyond potential crash risk to include operational delays, increased costs, and elevated legal risk.

FAQs – Drone-Related Aviation Accidents in California

Q1: What should I do if a drone flies too close to my aircraft?

A: Immediately report the incident to the FAA via the DroneZone website or hotline. Document time, location, altitude, and any evasive action. If an accident or damage occurs, consult a specialized aviation-accident attorney experienced in drone liability.

Q2: Are drones dangerous to commercial aircraft?

A: Yes. While complete mid-air collisions are rare, drones passing within 200–300 feet of aircraft have been reported in California. Such proximity can threaten rotor/engine ingestion during take-off or landing phases. Data show California has a high number of reported encounters.

Q3: What penalties apply for unauthorized drone flights near airports or wildfire zones?

A: Civil penalties can reach **$75,000** for interference with emergency aircraft. Criminal penalties may include up to **12 months’ imprisonment** for flying in a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) protecting fireresponse aircraft.

Q4: Can victims of drone-related aviation incidents obtain compensation?

A: Yes. Victims (passengers, crew, ground personnel, property owners) may have claims against drone operators (negligence), manufacturers (product defect), or airports/airlines (failure of safety protocols). A law firm such as Kash Legal Group can assist with evaluation.

Q5: How can airports or operators mitigate risk?

A: Implement drone-detection systems, coordinate with local law enforcement and fire agencies, enforce geofencing and Remote ID compliance, educate public and hobbyist operators.

Q6: What must California drone operators know?

A: Register the drone with the FAA if weight is over 0.55 lbs.; comply with Part 107 (commercial) or recreational rules; stay below 400 feet, maintain VLOS, avoid flying near airports without authorization, respect state/local ordinances (which may impose additional restrictions).

Recommendations for Stakeholders

- **Airports and Aviation Operators:** Strengthen detection and response frameworks; upkeep radar/RF sensors; coordinate drills for drone incursion scenarios.
- **Regulators and Policymakers:** Increase funding for Counter-drone research; update State/Local rules to close loopholes; encourage public education.
- **Drone Operators (Commercial and Hobby):** Follow all FAA rules including Remote ID; review local ordinances; avoid restricted zones especially near airports and TFRs.
- **Victims or Those Affected by Drone-Related Incidents:** Seek legal review from a firm that handles personal injury/aviation accident cases. (Kash Legal Group has a strong review history in California

Conclusion

In California's high-traffic skies, the intersection of unmanned and manned aviation presents an evolving safety challenge. The rising number of drone registrations and reported encounters—alongside high-stakes incidents such as the collision between a drone and fire-fighting aircraft—demonstrate the need for robust regulation, technological mitigation, and legal preparedness.

Those impacted by a drone-related aviation safety incident should consider seeking counsel from law firms experienced in aviation and personal injury matters, to navigate complex liability, regulatory interaction, and claim processes.

By combining awareness of the regulatory framework, deployment of detection and mitigation technologies, and professional legal support when needed, stakeholders in California's airspace can work toward safer skies for everyone.

About the Organization

Kash Legal is a leading personal injury law firm in California, dedicated to providing exceptional legal representation and achieving outstanding results for clients. With a reputation for litigation excellence, the firm has recovered millions of dollars for individuals and families... Read More...

Kash Legal Group main office:
2839 S Robertson Blvd,
Los Angeles, CA 90034
Phone number: (888) 527-4128

Client Reviews & Reputation

"Always approachable and friendly—they treated me like a person, not just a client." –Delilah T, Los Angeles

"Los Angeles office was professional, friendly, and super supportive." –Grace B, San Diego

"After a serious slip and fall at a local Murrieta grocery store ... They were tenacious in proving the store's negligence and secured a settlement that far exceeded my initial expectations." –Sage P, San Jose

"My family was devastated after a loved one's tragic death. The compassion and professionalism of the wrongful death lawyers at Kash Legal Group were incredible." – Sarah T, Sacramento

"Kash Legal not only assisted me with everything I needed but won my car accident case. Will definitely recommend to others." – Frank, K, Bakersfield

amberjack

Dress Shoes for Pilots

Scan Me to Shop Now!

- Slip Resistant Outsole
- TSA Compliant
- Complies with Uniform Guidelines
- Non-FOD Carrying Tread
- Premium Full-Grain Leather
- Incredibly Supportive Insole



www.amberjack.shop



New FAA Rule Regarding Falsification or Incorrect Statements

Clean-up on Title 14

WRITTEN BY: MATTHEW BULOW

The Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) published a final rule in the Federal Register on September 3, 2025 that addresses the plethora of falsification regulations found throughout Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The Rule, which became effective on November 3, 2025, intends to "amend[], restructur[e], and consolidat[e] the falsification regulations presently located throughout Title 14 of the CFR."

The new rule removes the falsification regulations throughout Title 14 and consolidates them into a single falsification regulation at Title 14 CFR chapter I subchapter A part 3 subpart D. The change is intended to standardize sanction provisions and provide consistent sanction determinations, hopefully increasing predictability for pilots, aircraft mechanics, and essentially all certificate holders in the aviation and commercial space industries as to whether sanctions will be levied due to falsification, reproduction, alteration, omission, or incorrect statements and what those sanctions will proscribe.

New Rule

The new rule essentially prohibits false statements, productions, reproductions, or alterations for fraudulent purposes, and knowing omissions of material fact in relevant documents related to any authorization, certification, etc. (referred to generally as "Authorizations") or to show compliance with a relevant provision. This is certainly not news to anyone who has ever applied for an FAA airman medical certificate or signed off on maintenance work on an aircraft, but the consolidation of the regulations makes this requirement much more navigable than it was in the past; although it is still a burden, even for an attorney!

The more significant changes come in the sanctions associated with any of the listed offenses. The sanctions proscribed for any such offenses of falsification are now uniform, though not entirely predictable. Any such offense is a basis for either: (1) denying, suspending, modifying, revoking, rescinding, removing, or withdrawing any authorization, certificate, permit, etc. that was issued or granted by the Administrator, or (2) a civil penalty (read: "fine"). Ultimately, falsification of any document submitted to the FAA or DOT that was material to the FAA's decision in issuing, granting, or affirming the validity of any Authorizations is grounds to revoke any or all Authorizations and may also result in a fine.

Significance

As mentioned, the changes made to the falsification rules are not drastic, as the new rule amounts to more of a "tidying up" by the FAA of one small part of the expansive and messy Federal Aviation Regulations. Even so, if you find yourself in a position where you may have falsified a document submitted to the FAA for just about any purpose, whether intentional or not, you should reach out to counsel for guidance.



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...



BAGGAGE

Skip the Winter Dip

Written By: Reini Thijssen

Many people experience a noticeable dip in mood and energy during the colder months; a pattern often called the “winter blues.” In more serious cases, this is recognized as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). With less sunlight, colder weather, and shorter days, it is common to feel more tired, low, and less interested in social connections or daily activities.

Having more energy to carry you through the darker, gloomier days is a goal worth pursuing. It can transform the way you experience the colder months, making them feel lighter and more manageable instead of draining. The solution is not managing your time better or squeezing more into your day, but rather managing your energy more wisely and intentionally. This article will explore science-backed strategies to help you navigate seasonal shifts, so that you can feel more energetic and resilient throughout the darker months.

When winter rolls in, many of us feel sluggish or down, and there are good reasons why. As daylight reduces, we tend to spend more time indoors, get less sun on our skin, move less, and see fewer people. These changes reduce vitamin D production, lower physical activity, and cut our social energy, all of which can drag down our mood and vitality.

How to Recognize?

You might notice the winter blues through symptoms like:

- Fatigue
- A changed sleep pattern
- Poor mood, feeling down
- Low energy
- Loss of appetite or overeating
- Reduced desire for social interaction

Much of this is interconnected. If your sleep changes, you will feel tired during the day. When energy is low, it is harder to stay positive. With a bad mood, we often lose the motivation to cook well or socialize. After such a day, sleep is also more restless. So how do you break out of it?

1. Feed Your Mind’s Needs

Just like your body needs food and water, your mind has core needs to function well. Psychological research identified three basic psychological needs that fuel our mental energy:

- Autonomy – having control over how you spend your time
- Connection – feeling close to others and feeling supported
- Competence – doing things you’re good at and seeing progress
- When these needs are **met**, people are more likely to:
- Be engaged and motivated
- Take initiative
- Learn and grow
- Feel satisfied and resilient

When these needs ar**e ignored**, it leads to:

- Burnout
- Withdrawal
- Reduced performance
- Higher stress

This also helps explain the so-called “weekend effect.” Many people feel more energetic on the weekend, not because they sleep more, but because they are better able to meet these core needs. You choose what to do, when to do it, and who to spend time with. That sense of freedom and connection makes a real difference.

2. Take A Brisk Walk

If you tend to hit an energy crash around 4p.m., this is a widespread phenomenon. That is usually when many people reach for a sugary snack or a cup of coffee. Our energy naturally dips in the mid-afternoon, and food gives us a fast but temporary boost. Eating, especially fatty or sweet foods, often works like self-medication. It helps regulate our mood, keeps us going, and lifts us out of an afternoon lull. But while that snack might feel good at the moment, it does not last long.

In one study, participants were asked to either eat a sugary snack or take a ten-minute brisk walk, as if they were late for an appointment. The results were clear: those who walked felt more energized and less tense, and that effect lasted up to two hours. In contrast, the snack group felt a brief lift, followed by more tension and fatigue just an hour later.

So, the next time you feel sluggish, try walking instead of snacking. Even if it’s the last thing you feel like doing, it can restore your energy, elevate your mood, and help curb cravings too.

3. Live Like a Sprinter (Not a Marathon Runner)

Instead of approaching each day as a marathon, try thinking like a sprinter. Marathon-style living often means being stretched too thin, physically and emotionally. In contrast, sprinters work in short bursts of focused effort, followed by real recovery. They push hard, but only for a while, knowing a break is coming soon.

This same approach can be applied to everyday life. Structuring the day into focused sprints followed by intentional rest helps

energy last longer and improve performance. Simple routines can support this rhythm:

- Start the day with a slow, mindful breakfast.
- Get outside during the day, even briefly. (Take that brisk walk!)
- Take short breaks during focused time: listen to music, stretch, and/or breathe deeply.
- The key to making these practices stick is to turn them into rituals. When a habit becomes automatic, like brushing your teeth, it is more likely to stay consistent, even on the busiest days.

Pro Tip: Work, school, studies, family, friends, appointments, household chores, meetings… Even a busy person sometimes needs rest. Dare to say no once in a while and try doing nothing for a few minutes a day. Read a book or magazine, sleep in on the weekend, go to bed early, try meditating, or take a yoga class. Relaxation reduces stress and boosts your energy.

4. Dietary Supplements

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, our bodies may need a little extra support. This is where certain supplements can be helpful. While they are not a cure-all, vitamins can support you by filling nutritional gaps and improve your well-being. For some, this added support can make a noticeable difference in how they feel during the winter season.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is crucial for maintaining a healthy immune system and supporting bone health, but it also plays a significant role in mental well-being. Often called the "sunshine vitamin," vitamin D is produced in the skin in response to sunlight. Low levels (especially during the darker months) have been associated with tiredness, low mood, and decreased cognitive function. Supplementation can help maintain optimal levels, contributing to overall mood and energy.

Iron

Iron is an essential mineral that plays a critical role in energy production and immune function. An iron deficiency can lead to fatigue and low mood. Iron supports the conversion of food into energy, helping to maintain healthy energy levels and combat weariness.

Magnesium

Magnesium, particularly magnesium bisglycinate, supports nerve transmission and brain function. It plays a role in regulating the nervous system and may contribute to mood balance. Emerging research suggests magnesium may help ease symptoms of low mood and stress.

Fish Oil (Omega-3)

Rich in omega-3 fatty acids EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), fish oil is known for its positive impact on mental health. These essential fats are vital for brain health and have been linked to improved mood. Supplementing with fish oil may be especially beneficial during the winter months.

Note: Supplementation is not a cure, but a support when dietary intake or lifestyle is insufficient. Always consult a healthcare provider before beginning supplementation.

Final Thoughts

Energy is not just about sleep or exercise. It is also about rhythm—knowing when to push and when to pause. By paying attention to how you feel and move through the day, and supporting your mind as well as your body, you can find more balance and energy.

Remember, you are definitely not alone if you are feeling a bit off during the winter months. It is entirely normal, just a natural response to colder temperatures and shorter, darker days. The good news? By being aware of this, you can make winter feel much more manageable and enjoyable. You do not need a complete lifestyle overhaul. With just a few simple changes, you can brighten up those gloomy days. So, wrap up warmly, step outside, and do not forget to treat yourself to a cozy cup of hot tea.

If you start noticing patterns, such as persistent low mood, lack of energy, changes in sleep or appetite, withdrawing from social activities, especially during the darker months, it may be more than just a winter dip. Learning more about Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and strategies for managing it can help.

*Reaching out for professional support can make a meaningful difference. If you want to explore what you are experiencing or discuss strategies to better manage these patterns, contact **reini@emeraldmentalhealth.com** or visit **www.emeraldmentalhealth.com.***



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…

Resources

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01

Hansen, A. L., Ambroziak, G., Thornton, D., Mundt, J. C., Kahn, R. E., Dahl, L., Waage, L., Kattenbraker, D., Araujo, P., Murison, R., Rypdal, K., & Grung, B. (2020). Vitamin D supplementation during winter: Effects on stress resilience in a randomized control trial. *Nutrients, 12*(11), 3258. https://doi.org/10.3390/nu12113258

Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K., Belury, M. A., Andridge, R., Malarkey, W. B., & Glaser, R. (2011). *Omega-3 supplementation lowers inflammation and anxiety in medical students: A randomized controlled trial. Brain, Behavior, and Immunity, 25*(8), 1725–1734. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbi.2011.07.229

Schwartz, T., & Loehr, J. (2001). *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal*. Free Press.



Know Your Booze Clues

Making informed choices about alcohol

Written By: Scott Darragh

As a young pilot, you quickly learn the incandescent draw of alcohol in aviation culture. When I first visited Air Guard units, I was stunned to see a bar on site next to the flight line. It felt a little James Bond: you just flew a miracle of engineering—why not bask in your suave pilot awesomeness with a frosty beer?

Over time I realized those images in our heads create our reality. *I'm invincible. A couple of beers won't touch my fitness.* The uncomfortable truth is that alcohol is a neurotoxin—and your body treats it like one every single time.

Alcohol's effects are sneaky because they touch almost every system. When you drink, your body prioritizes clearing ethanol before anything else; fat burning is suppressed for hours, and lipid oxidation drops substantially while alcohol is being metabolized. In controlled trials, ethanol ingestion decreased whole-body fat oxidation and favored fat storage—exactly the opposite of what most travelers want.[1]

Sleep takes a hit, too. Alcohol might help you fall asleep faster, but it shatters deep sleep cycles and cuts down REM—the stage that repairs muscles, hormones, and alertness. Studies show even one drink before bed can reduce REM by up to 40%, which is catastrophic for recovery and reaction time.[2]

Layer alcohol on top of an already dehydrating work environment and the impact compounds. Typical cruise-altitude cabin humidity runs about 10–20%, and alcohol increases urine output by suppressing vasopressin—so you lose more fluid, thicken the blood, and feel worse the next day.[3]

On the hormone front, dose matters. Heavy or repeated intake is linked with lower testosterone and broader endocrine disruption; acute high doses have shown roughly 20% testosterone suppression within 24 hours in controlled studies.[4] For a profession built on alertness, focus, and composure, that's a big deal.

If you choose to drink, strategy helps. Think of your stomach like a **sponge** and alcohol like **paint thinner**. If the sponge is dry, the thinner soaks straight through—fast and harsh. But if the sponge is already damp with food, everything slows down, spreads out, and does less damage. Eating before you drink blunts the spike in blood alcohol and keeps your system steadier. Studies show any food helps, but **protein**—like tofu, eggs, or grilled chicken—works best because it digests slowly. For pilots and travelers, that extra time is like adding a protective layer on the inside of your stomach. It won't stop the paint thinner completely, but it keeps it from eating straight through.[5]

The next morning, shift into **recovery mode**. Your liver is like your aircraft's oil filter—it clears out contaminants so everything keeps running smoothly. Cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, kale, and Brussels sprouts contain natural "cleaning agents" (compounds like sulforaphane and DIM) that help your liver enzymes flush out the leftover byproducts of alcohol. You're basically running a self-cleaning cycle on your engine.[6]

Eat, hydrate, rest—those are the three steps that get your system back to baseline so you can fly through the next day feeling sharper and lighter instead of bogged down.

Here's a simple plan for how to mitigate the negative effects of alcohol:

Two-for-Two: Cap it at two drinks and stop at least two hours before bed.

Hydrate hard: For every drink, add about a liter of water with electrolytes.

Protein before you pour: Eat first to temper absorption and curb cravings later.

Greens after: Help your liver detoxify with broccoli, kale, or Brussels sprouts.

Swap the ritual, not the reward: Mocktail, walk, or magnesium—find your recovery ritual.

Watch your data: HRV (heart rate variability) and sleep trackers don't lie; let them show you what your body is saying.

None of this is about guilt. It's about growth. When you understand what alcohol does—to fat oxidation, sleep, hydration, and

hormones—you're free to choose with eyes open. Sometimes that drink on the overnight will still be worth it; sometimes it won't. Either way, you'll feel empowered because you have the truth and a plan, not a story in your head.

References

Siler SQ, Neese RA, Hellerstein MK. *De novo lipogenesis, lipid kinetics, and whole-body lipid balance in humans after acute alcohol consumption.* Am J Clin Nutr. 1999;70(5):928–936.

Ebrahim IO et al. *Alcohol and sleep I: effects on normal sleep.* Alcohol Clin Exp Res. 2013;37(4):539–549.

Fortney SM et al. *Body fluid balance during flight: mechanisms and implications.* Aviat Space Environ Med. 1998;69(6):562–568.

Sierksma A et al. *Moderate alcohol consumption and hormonal balance in men.* Eur J Clin Nutr. 2004;58(8):1208–1214.

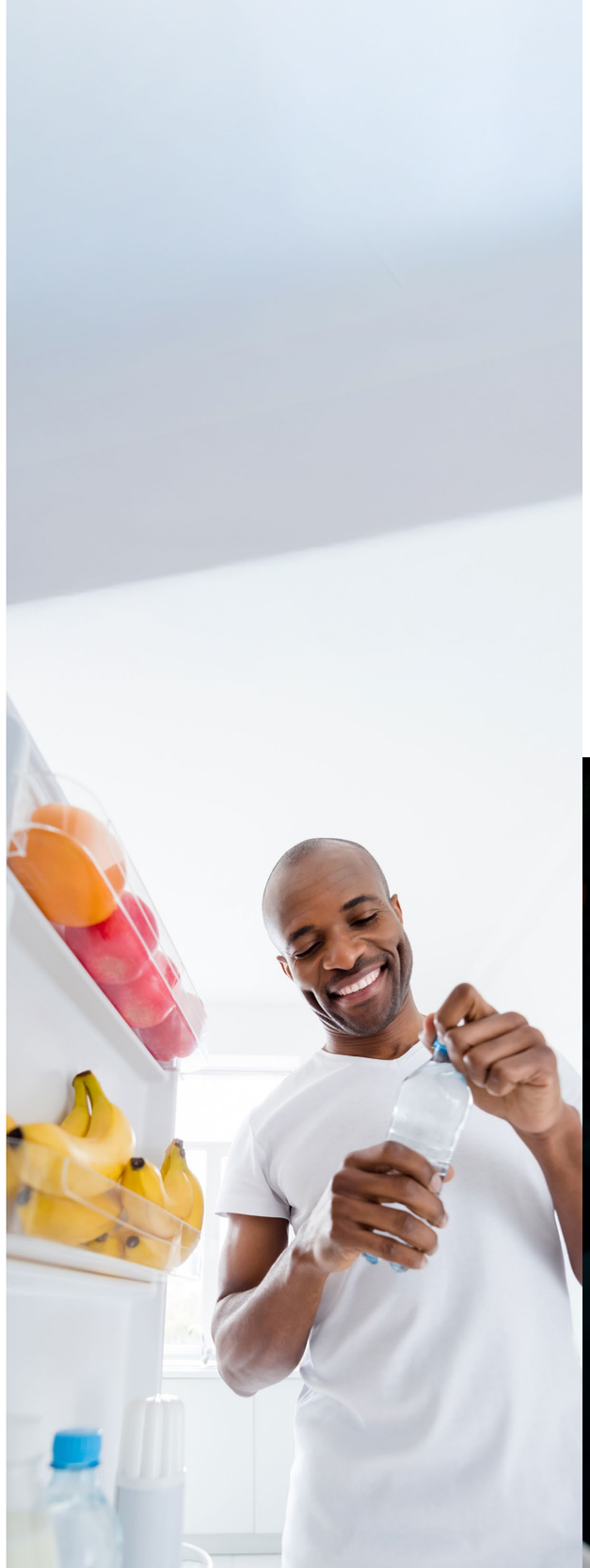
Fraser AG, Rosalki SB. *Gastric emptying and blood ethanol levels after food.* Br Med J. 1978;1(6115):1008–1009.

Egner PA et al. *Broccoli sprout–derived sulforaphane modulates hepatic enzymes in humans.* Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2011;108(7):2448–2453.



About the Author

Scott Darragh is an MSP-based 737 airline captain, former U.S. Army helicopter pilot, aviation officer, who holds a BS in history and journalism from Washington State University. Read More...



LOSE FAT BEFORE YOU LOSE YOUR MEDICAL

JET SET TRAINER

YOUR AVERAGE TRAINER DOESN'T WORK REDEYES...

WE DO.

VISIT JETSETTRAINER.COM

AND LOSE 1-2LBS A WEEK



LEFT SEAT RIGHT INFO

What are pilots like you getting paid? Find out in seconds.

Know your worth before your next offer, raise, or job switch.

AirComp™ CALCULATOR

PAY RIGHT - BEFORE FLIGHT™

www.AirCompCalculator.com



Preparing for the Annual Compensation Review – Part II

What you should know about compensation and benefits

Written By: Christopher M. Broyhill, PhD, CAM, CCP

Last month, I provided an overview of the elements of the compensation package for employees to consider as compensation review season approaches. This month, we're going to talk about benefits, but rather than dissect the different programs, we're going to focus on the financial impact of two programs: medical coverage and retirement plans.

Before we begin that discussion, here's some context. Remember from last month, the big picture here is the company's total rewards package, and that typically, these packages consist of five elements mentioned previously: compensation, benefits, well-being, development, and recognition. Benefits, the second element, is an all-encompassing term for the programs an employer offers which are designed to strike a balance between an employee's personal and professional life.

When we talk about the benefits a company offers, they fall into two areas: income protection programs and pay-for-time-not-worked programs.

- **Income protection programs are designed to protect the employee's standard of living and that of his/her family against catastrophic losses.**
  - Mandatory (legally required) programs can include:
    - Unemployment
    - Medical
    - Retirement
  - Voluntary (at the discretion of the employer) programs can include:
    - Wellness
    - Mental/behavioral health
    - Life insurance
- **Pay-for-time-not-worked programs—designed to protect the employee's income during periods when the employee is not working**
  - For time when the employee is at the workplace but not performing their primary job, these programs can cover:
    - Travel time (with certain exceptions)
    - Training time
    - Break time
  - For time when the employee is not at the workplace, these programs can cover:
    - Designated holidays
    - Personal/sick days
    - Vacation

Now, with this as prelude, let's talk about the financial impact that two of the income protection programs can have on employees: medical benefits and retirement benefits.

Medical Benefits

Since most people in the United States get their medical coverage through their employer, medical benefits are a key focus for employees. Managed-care programs are the most common medical plans offered because the cost risk is shared between the company and the employee. While you don't need to be a benefits expert to determine the extent of a company's medical plan and the financial impact on your household, you do need to have some knowledge so that you can weigh different plans and understand possible costs. Typically, the more choices a medical plan offers, the more it will cost the employer and you. Here are the most common types of plans:

- Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) require the employee to choose a primary-care provider (PCP) from a fixed network and require the employee to get referrals from the PCP to see specialists in the network.
- Preferred Provider Organizations (PPOs) do not require the employee to seek referrals from a PCP—the employee can see whomever they want, but if they see a provider outside the network, their costs will likely be higher; and
- Point of Service (POS)—a hybrid of a PPO and HMO—requires the employee to select a PCP who provides referrals to specialists in and out of the network—fees will be higher for out-of-network providers, and the employee's portion of the cost will likely increase.

In addition to these options, some companies may offer pre-tax health funds to help defray employees' out-of-pocket costs for plans with higher deductibles. Employer contributions, employee contributions, or both can fund these pre-tax health fund accounts.

The bottom line from a financial perspective is that when you examine your current benefits package or that of a potential employer, you should be able to classify the medical benefits offered, determine the choices available, the level of coverage(s) you and your family will have, and what your out-of-pocket costs will be. Some companies offer very robust coverage and require employees to pay very little, while others are the opposite. An accident or prolonged illness can devastate a family's financial reserves very quickly, so quality medical coverage, particularly if there are children in the picture,

BACK TO CONTENTS

is a must. One element that can be negotiable is the amount of healthcare premiums the employee is required to pay. As part of their retention strategy, some companies pay their employees' medical premiums, making that coverage a directly monetizable element to consider.

Retirement Benefits

While there are still some defined benefit plans (i.e. pensions) offered by companies, the most common plans are defined contribution plans, and these are almost always 401(k) employee savings plans. About 90% of employers offer 401(k) or similar contribution plans. Of these, 75% will allow catch-up contributions, and 66% will provide for hardship withdrawals.

While these plans can be quite simple, the IRS restrictions can limit their impact. Typically, an employee contributes pre-tax funds to a 401(k) account, and those funds can grow tax-free until they are withdrawn. Some companies match employee 401(k) contributions up to a certain percentage of the employee's total cash compensation. For example, if an employee earns $100,000 and the company has a 3% match, the employee contributes $3,000, and the employer matches that contribution with an additional $3,000. Match percentages can range from 3% to 16% and herein lies the misunderstanding. If a company offers a very generous 401(k) match, the employee needs to do the math to determine how much money they will actually receive. As of 2025, the IRS limits employee contributions to 401(k) accounts to $23,500 annually for those under 50 and $31,000 for those 50 and over, with a combined limit of $70,000 for employee and employer contributions. In 2026, those limits will increase to $24,500, $34,500, and $72,000, respectively. Additionally, the IRS will only allow the first $350,000 of total cash compensation to be matched, increasing to $360,000 in 2026.

Here's how that can work out. If the Widget Company offers a 12% 401(k) match, an employee with $250,000 of total cash compensation should glean $30,000 in matching funds if they put $30,000 of their pay away, but not so fast. The over-50 employee will indeed realize that match if he/she contributes, but the under-50 employee will be capped at $23,500 this year and $24,500 next year. If the total cash compensation rises to $300,000, the cap will take a greater toll, and at $350,000, the overall cap kicks in.

In summary, while the 401(k) match an employer offers is an important part of the overall package, the potential employee needs to do the math to determine the actual difference it will make.

One final piece of advice from the comp guy: If the company delays vesting matching funds for a 401(k), run for the hills. They're basically communicating distrust before they even hire you.



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...





529 Plans vs. Prepaid Tuition

Written by: Nolan Clark

Important Author's note: While this discussion focuses on the Texas prepaid-tuition plan, many states offer similar programs with comparable features. The decision-making process can often remain similar depending on where you live. If you would like us to review your state's prepaid plan in a future video or article, please reach out and let us know. Now, let's dive into the details.
When you become a parent, two things happen almost immediately:

1. You stop sleeping well.
2. You start thinking about college for your newborn, at least if you're a financial planner!

This article is based on a recent video discussion with Kevin Gormley, CFP®, CPA, and me, in which we explore the benefits and limitations of both 529 plans and the Texas Tuition Promise Fund. (If you prefer to watch instead of reading, check it out here: Leading Edge Financial Planning – YouTube)

Why Start Now?

College planning is similar to retirement planning in that the best time to start is now. Tuition costs have historically risen faster than almost any other expense, so waiting can be costly. Whether you choose a 529 plan, a prepaid tuition plan, or both, the most important step is to start saving as soon as you can.

Texas Prepaid Tuition Plan: How It Works

The Texas Tuition Promise Fund lets you lock in today's tuition rates for future college costs. Essentially, you're buying tuition units now that can be redeemed later, regardless of how much tuition increases.

Pros

- **Locks in current tuition rates**: Great if college costs keep rising.
- **Minimal market risk**: Your money isn't invested, so it won't fluctuate with the stock market.
- **Predictable**: You know what you're paying for tuition.

Cons

- **It covers tuition and fees only**: Room, board, books, and other expenses are not included, which can sometimes be as much as tuition and fees if not more.
- **Limited flexibility**: Designed for Texas colleges. If your child goes out of state, you'll get an equivalent dollar amount, but it may not cover full costs. If your child doesn't need the funds for tuition—for reasons like receiving a full scholarship, joining the military, or choosing not to attend college—you have several options, including:
  - **Transfer the plan** to another eligible family member.
  - **Roll over** the balance into a 529 plan for future education expenses.
  - **Request a refund,** subject to taxes and potential penalties on earnings.
- **Complexity**: You purchase tuition units, which are categorized into different types (Type 1, Type 2, Type 3) based on the school level.
  - **Type 1**: Most expensive, covers flagship universities.
  - **Type 2**: Average cost of Texas public schools.
  - **Type 3**: Community college level.

If you're interested in learning more, visit texastuitionpromisefund.com.
The site offers a calculator to help you estimate costs based on your child's age, unit type, and payment plan.

529 Savings Plan: How It Works

A 529 plan is sort of like a Roth IRA for college savings in that you contribute after-tax dollars, the money grows tax-free, and withdrawals for qualified education expenses are tax-free. However, unlike a Roth IRA, a 529 plan is specifically designed for education. If it is not used for education, gains in the 529 are taxable and include a 10% penalty when removed.

Pros

- **Flexibility**: Can be used to cover tuition, fees, room and board, books, and more.
- **Investment growth**: Your money is invested, so it can grow over time.
- **Can be used nationwide**: Not limited to state, (in our example here, Texas schools).

- **"Escape Hatch":** There are multiple ways to get monies out of 529's that have been updated in the last few years with new legislation, including moving it to a Roth IRA for your child if certain conditions are met.

Cons

- **Market risk**: Investment returns are not guaranteed and can vary. Most 529 plans use age-based portfolios that start aggressive (stocks) and gradually become conservative as your child approaches college age.
- **No guaranteed tuition rate**: If tuition skyrockets, you'll need strong investment returns to keep up (or more cash/loans to make up the difference).

Cost Example: Texas A&M

(Data Source: Peterson's Undergraduate and Graduate Institution Databases, copyright 2025. Peterson's, LLC. All rights reserved)

Here's a scenario that demonstrates why planning matters:

- **Texas A&M estimated annual cost in-state**: ~$26,000
  - Tuition & fees: $12,400 (covered by prepaid plan)
  - Room, board, books: $13,600 (not covered by prepaid plan)

In this example, if you use the prepaid tuition plan, you will still need a strategy for the other half of college costs—this is where a 529 plan could come into play.

Can You Use Both?

Absolutely. Sometimes our minds gravitate to a one-size-fits-all solution, when in reality, we can use both to optimize college savings. A few examples of using both plans to hedge your risks include:

- Prepaid plans can protect you if tuition keeps rising.
- 529 plans provide flexibility and cover non-tuition expenses. It is also a hedge in case college tuition does not continue to increase at such high rates. In this case, it could become more attractive than the prepaid plan.

Together, they have the potential to reduce the risk of being underfunded.

Getting Started

- **529 Plan**: It is a fairly easy process to open a 529 account in your state (or any state.) Some states even offer tax deductions for contributions.
- **Texas Prepaid Plan**: Go to **texastuitionpromisefund.com**, review unit types, and determine how much to purchase based on your goals.

Bottom Line

College isn't cheap, and costs continue to rise. Whether you choose a 529 plan, a prepaid-tuition plan, or a combination, the most important step is simply to start. The sooner you begin, the more flexibility and peace of mind you will have when your child heads to college.

In our experience, families who plan ahead, whether through a prepaid plan, a 529, or both, rarely regret it. What matters most is having a strategy in place and sticking to it. I leave you with two quotes from personal-finance expert, Morgan Housel. He explains in his book, *The Psychology of Money*, that sometimes sticking to a simple strategy is more effective than endlessly searching for the perfect one. Don't get bogged down by details; focus on saving and spending less than you earn.

- *"My own theory is that, in the real world, people do not want the mathematically optimal strategy. They want the strategy that maximizes how well they sleep at night."*
- *"The reasonable investors who love their technically imperfect strategies have an edge, because they're more likely to stick with those strategies.*



About the Author

Born and raised in Owensboro, Kentucky, **Nolan Clark** earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Finance, with a Personal Financial Planning Concentration... Read More...

Please tell us if we can help you on your journey to financial peace and prosperity! Hopefully, you found this article interesting and helpful. If you have any questions, contact us at 865-240-2292 or Nolan@leadingedgeplanning.com. Check out our Pilot Money Guys podcast where we regularly discuss these types of financial topics along with some fun airline news updates and interesting guest interviews. Even the editor and founder of Aero Crew News – Craig Pieper!

Schedule a Time to Chat
Take the Pilot Wealth Index Quiz
Read Before Fly Newsletter
Leading Edge YouTube
The Pilot Money Guys Podcast
Pilot Money Guys Instagram
Pilot and High-Income Blog
Submit a Suggestion

Leading Edge Financial Planning LLC ("LEFP") is a registered investment advisor. Advisory services are only offered to clients or prospective clients where LEFP and its representatives are properly licensed or exempt from licensure. For additional information, please visit our website at www.leadingedgeplanning.com. The information provided is for educational and informational purposes only and does not constitute investment advice, and it should not be relied on as such. It should not be considered a solicitation to buy or an offer to sell a security. It does not take into account any investor's particular investment objectives, strategies, tax status, or investment horizon. You should consult your attorney or tax advisor. The views expressed in this commentary are subject to change based on market and other conditions. These documents may contain certain statements that may be deemed forward-looking statements. Please note that any such statements are not guarantees of any future performance, and actual results or developments may differ materially from those projected. Any projections, market outlooks, or estimates are based upon certain assumptions and should not be construed as indicative of actual events that will occur. All information has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable, but its accuracy is not guaranteed. There is no representation or warranty as to the current accuracy, reliability, or completeness of, nor liability for, decisions based on such information, and it should not be relied on as such.

MORTGAGE

New Year, New Pay Rate – and Bigger Loan Limits

Why 2026 is a sweet spot for pilots

WRITTEN BY: JONATHAN KULAK



Every January, pilots across the industry get an automatic raise. Contractual pay bumps hit the books—usually three to five percent depending on seat and longevity. It's automatic, predictable, and one of the few things in this industry you can actually plan around.

This year, that pay bump lines up perfectly with another bit of good news: the new conforming loan limits for 2026 are going up again. The 2025 limit was $806,500. The 2026 number should land north of $819,000 once the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) releases it, and high-cost markets will likely break the million-dollar mark.

Put those two things together—your January raise and higher loan ceilings—and you get more buying power without having to mess with a jumbo loan. Translation: easier approval, smaller down payment, and less red tape.

The Pay Raise Advantage

That yearly bump in pay can make a real difference when you're qualifying for a mortgage. Let's say you're a captain making $180 an hour, flying 75 hours a month. A 5% raise to $189 adds roughly $675 a month to your gross income. That alone can translate to around $75K–$85K more in buying power under conventional guidelines.

Because we're W-2 employees with contract-based pay, underwriters love us. There's no guesswork, no "prove your future income" like self-employed borrowers. They can see your raise in writing and your history of stability—and that makes for a clean, strong file.

Higher Limits, Lower Hassle

Every year the FHFA adjusts conforming loan limits based on national home prices. Staying inside that limit means your loan qualifies for standard Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac terms. Go above it, and you're in jumbo territory—stricter credit rules, more reserves, and usually higher rates.

With the 2026 limit moving north of $819K, pilots buying in the $850K–$870K range can now stay conventional instead of jumbo. That opens up more options, especially in hot markets like Denver, Tampa, Dallas, and anywhere near a training center or major base.

You Don't Have to Wait to Buy

Here's the part most people don't realize; once the new limits are published, lenders can use them on any loan that closes January 1 or later. So if you go under contract in December and close after New Year's, you're good. You'll still qualify under the 2026 numbers. That's huge for anyone planning a Q1 move or base transfer—you can find the house now, skip the January feeding frenzy, and still get all the new benefits.

Why Pilots Have the Edge

Our income is steady, contractual, and built to grow. We can show exact pay raises years in advance. And because we already think in terms of procedures, timing, and contingencies, most of us handle the mortgage process like another preflight checklist.
In short, lenders love working with pilots when they understand what they're looking at.

Game Plan for Early 2026

1. Update your preapproval once your January pay stub hits.
2. Ask your lender when they'll adopt the new FHFA limits—most do it right away.
3. If you were jumbo last year, have them rerun your numbers—you might fit conventional now.
4. Time your closing date for January or later to capture both your raise and the new limit.
5. Keep an eye on rates. If they dip toward 6%, you'll be ready to move fast.

BACK TO CONTENTS

Real-Life Example

In 2025, a pilot buying an $860K home with 5% down would have needed a jumbo loan because the conforming limit capped at $806,500. With the 2026 limit moving to roughly $819K, that same purchase now fits neatly under conventional guidelines. Add your January raise, and you qualify easier, faster, and probably at a better rate.
You didn't take on more—it just got simpler.

Pilots Lending to Pilots

At Trident, that's not a slogan—it's just who we are. Our team is full of current and former pilots who have sat reserve, changed bases, upgraded, and lived the same schedule chaos you're dealing with.
We get how per diem, training pay, and contract raises work because we've been there. You don't have to explain your bid line or why you'll make more in January—we already know. And that's what separates us from the big-box lenders who think "guaranteed hours" means overtime.

Final Approach

Timing matters, and pilots understand timing better than anyone. Between your January raise and the new conforming limits, early 2026 is a perfect setup—more income, more room, less hassle.

If you've been sitting on the sidelines waiting for things to calm down, this might be your chance to make a move before the market heats back up.

Have questions or want to explore your options? Email me at jk@mythl.com or call/text 850-377-1114 or visit my website tridenthomeloans.com/jonathan-kulak. I'm always happy to help a fellow pilot navigate the mortgage skies.

Trident Home Loans – Pilots Lending to Pilots
// tridenthomeloans.com/jonathan-kulak

This article is part of my ongoing mortgage series for AeroCrew News—helping pilots build smarter financial flight plans.



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...



PROFESSIONAL PILOTS OF TOMORROW

Free mentor program • Unbiased info • Connect to a growing network

Professional Pilots of Tomorrow is a mentor program comprised of volunteers and designed to assist up-and-coming pilots make informed decisions regarding which regional airline will best suit their needs.

Our aim is to provide confidential, insightful, and unbiased mentoring to pilots by more experience and seasoned professional pilots from the airlines throughout the aviation industry.

We've created an environment where aspiring pilots are well prepared to make the critical early career and lifestyle choices unique to the aviation industry.

JOIN US!

Visit our website, and fill out the "interested pilot" form
www.theppot.org **info@theppot.org**

BUILT FOR PILOTS *backed by* EXPERTS

FAA Medical Denial,
Pilot Certificate Defense,
and Aircraft Crashes

RAMOS AVIATION LAW



FEATURE

Hope Above the Clouds: *The Legacy of Angel Flight Central*

WRITTEN BY: JENNA GERDES

In 1995, Kansas City pilot Jim Stevens was searching for purpose. Having retired early for health reasons, he was grounded quite literally and figuratively when his wife's United Methodist bishop asked what he planned to do next. The question stirred something in him.

Jim had recently read about a pilot who used his private plane to help people reach medical care they couldn't otherwise access. The bishop loved the simple idea and offered to give him $3,000 in seed money from the church. Jim called up some pilot friends, and they set a goal to find people who may be in need of far-off medical care. They thought if they could fly 12 flights in the first year, it would be an amazing success.

Jim being a cancer survivor himself knew firsthand the stress of seeking treatment and couldn't imagine if he hadn't had the means to travel and reach the care he needed when he was sick. They launched what was first called Wings Over Mid-America with nothing but gusto and a few hardworking and compassionate volunteers willing to fly and provide screening and flight coordination support on the ground. They learned the need was great. They far surpassed their goal of 12 flights in that first year by flying 12 flights in the first month!

That spark became the foundation for what is now Angel Flight Central (AFC), and the phone continues to ring every day at its headquarters at the Downtown Kansas City Airport (MKC). Angel Flight Central now operates within a network of charitable aviation non-profits that cover every state within the United States. Angel Flight Central works with patients who are originating from ten Midwest states: Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Indiana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota. Since Jim's first flight, Angel Flight Central has flown over 52,000 free flights for children and adults needing far-away, non-emergency medical care. Over 17 million nautical miles have been flown—the equivalent of flying around the world about 683 times. The organization has grown from a few volunteer pilots to over 330 active volunteer pilots within the ten states. They operate with a full-time staff of five who manage the day-to-day operations of screening passengers, routing



In 1995, Jim Stevens launched Wings Over Mid-America, a small beginning that evolved into Angel Flight Central, connecting thousands to lifesaving medical care. // Credit: Angel Flight Central



Pilot and founder of Angel Flight Central, Jim Stevens, flying a patient to treatment in the mid 90s. // Credit: Angel Flight Central

BACK TO CONTENTS

flights, and matching them with volunteer pilots. Angel Flight Central continues to remain a grass-roots organization with volunteer pilots donating their time, aircraft (rented or owned) and any fuel associated with the flight. Just last year, their volunteer pilots donated the equivalent of over $2.3 million in free flight services. The ripple effects of this can be felt across decades, as is the case with Jessica Ressel, one of Jim's first patient/passengers.

In March 1996, then eleven-year-old Jessica Ressel from Springfield, Missouri, was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive brain-stem tumor known as diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG). Her family found treatment in Houston that offered a glimmer of hope, but the road to get there was steep. Monthly travel, mounting medical bills, and time away from work made the burden nearly impossible to carry. That's when Jim Stevens and his newly formed network of volunteer pilots stepped in.

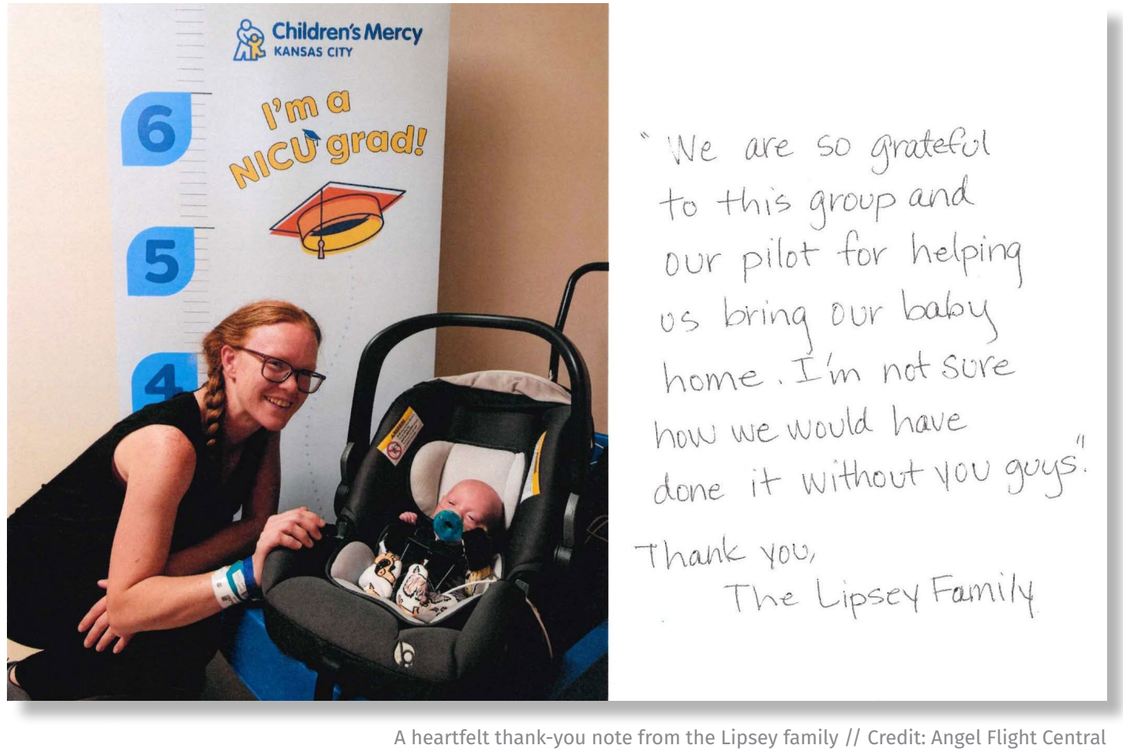
For two years, Angel Flight Central pilots flew Jessica and her family to Houston, never charging a dime. Jessica wasn't expected to survive. The medications and trips were a last-chance experimental opportunity her parents, family, and community hoped would work. Every time they called, there were met with an enthusiastic "Yes!" from the compassionate flight coordinators on the other end of the line. Jessica's story soon became one of Angel Flight Central's first and most defining missions. She was featured in AFC's second-ever "Wingspan" newsletter, her smiling photo capturing the spirit of compassion, connection, and courage that continue to guide the organization to this day.

Nearly thirty years later, Jessica's story and the vision of founder Jim Stevens continue to shape every mission that takes off. What began as a handful of pilots eager to share their passion with those in need, is now responsible for providing over 2,500 free flights for people in need in the Midwest every year. Jessica did survive! Her tumor shrank and thirty years later, she is healthy, happy, has two beautiful children and a family who could not be more grateful for the support they received during that difficult time.

Jessica's story is not unique to the ears of flight coordinators at Angel Flight Central. Every day the phone rings and on the other end is a patient, caregiver, doctor, or social worker reaching out for a glimmer of hope. More than 90% of flights help children and adults reach medical care for chemotherapy, radiation, pre- and post-operative transplant procedures, second opinions, clinical trials, and to reach rare-disease specialists while removing the financial burden that travel can bring. Angel Flight Central will consider any compassionate reason to fly and any problem



Collage featuring Jessica Ressel // Credit: Angel Flight Central video Ressel Family Story - Wine Flight 2025 - 30th Anniversary



A heartfelt thank-you note from the Lipsey family // Credit: Angel Flight Central



In partnership with Silver State Service Dogs, Angel Flight Central helped a service dog reach specialized training, a key step toward giving a veteran or first responder a new companion.// Credit: Angel Flight Central

that might be solved between two runways. The other 10% are flights of compassion—delivering breast milk from depots to rural neonatal intensive care units, helping children and adults at the end of life experience flight, relocating domestic violence victims, transporting service puppies to training facilities (and back to their veteran, first responder or visually impaired new owner). They also assist in times of national disaster such as the recent flooding in North Carolina or historically, in Hurricane Katrina.

The process to request a flight is simple—a ten-minute online flight request that anyone can complete on behalf of a patient in need. From there, Angel Flight Central's team carefully reviews each request to ensure the passenger has a medical need for free air transportation, is medically stable and able to get in and out of a general aviation aircraft. But it wasn't always this smooth and seamless. In 1995, volunteer coordinators would screen, record, and call pilots to arrange flights. Everything was recorded in a big binder and sent every week via overnight FedEx to a different volunteer flight coordinator who would man the on-call pager 24/7.

Now, with charitable aviation's proprietary software system, the mission is posted to an online portal where volunteer pilots can browse and accept flights that match their aircraft type, range, and availability. Although many things with charitable aviation have been made easier with technology, the biggest struggle continues to be outreach. Because the resource is not finite and volunteer pilots will fly as many times as needed, there exists the wonderful advantage of a non-profit with capacity to help more people in need. They just don't know about it.

Angel Flight Central needs help spreading the word. People who may be newly confronted with a life-changing medical diagnosis, need to be made aware that the organization is there to make their journey easier. There is no income requirement as Angel Flight Central considers a medical need to be a financial need. There is no limit to how many times a passenger can use the services from a single flight to 100. The organization has also grown partnerships with commercial airlines when flights are too great a distance for its volunteer pilots to fly. Southwest Airlines graciously and generously donates thousands of free tickets to children, adults and their caregivers to medical appointments. Currently, Angel Flight Central does not accept federal or state dollars. Funding is provided through private donors, corporate sponsors, and 70% of its annual operating budget is generated each year through its largest annual event—*Wine Flight*.









All photos credit: Angel Flight Central

BACK TO CONTENTS



Smiles, wine, and giving back: *Wine Flight* brings people together to support patients and families in need of critical medical care.// Credit: Angel Flight Central

For the past 20 years, *Wine Flight* has served as AFC's largest annual fundraiser, and just like Jim's vision for the organization, it grew purely out of a few wonderful people who saw an opportunity. Doug Frost, one of only four people in the world to simultaneously hold both Master of Wine and Master Sommelier titles, created The Jefferson Cup Invitational. It aimed to showcase that America wines can be fantastic too, and it grew to be a large annual wine competition. At the end of the competition, what remained were nearly full bottles of wines that had merely been tasted by the event's judges. Matt Nevinger, who was operating as wine competition judge could not help but think that this wine could be put to good use. He proposed to his father, Tom Holcom, one of the first members of the board at Wings Over Mid America, perhaps they could charge people to taste the competition wines and donate the money to the organization. The event was born. What began as a creative way to repurpose wine, has turned into fueling the organization's ability to focus staff time on outreach, partnerships, and connecting with new passengers in need. To date, *Wine Flight* has netted more than $3.3 million to keep providing free flights for people in need.

Angel Flight Central continues to demonstrate how to be adaptive and the compassionate people behind the mission are always ready to roll up their sleeves to give. When The Jefferson Cup Wine Invitational ended, wineries and private wine collectors around the country stepped up to continue to support the mission. In 2025, more than 600 full

BACK TO CONTENTS





Left: Founder Jim Stevens with Jessica Ressel and her family at this year's Wine Flight—a full-circle moment as Angel Flight Central celebrates 30 years of compassion in flight. Right: Click to watch the Ressel family share their history with Angel Flight Central. // Credit: Angel Flight Central

bottles of wine were donated to the event for guests to enjoy. And the wine competition judges continue to attend, volunteering their time to provide the tasting experience to guests. The first *Wine Flight* had around 100 attendees that is now a crowd of 900! The mission continues to fly.

This year's *Wine Flight* event was especially meaningful, featuring Jim Stevens and Jessica Ressel as guests of honor highlighting a beautiful full-circle moment nearly three decades in the making. Together, they represent both the heart and the history of Angel Flight Central—the dream that started it all, and the young girl whose journey helped define its purpose. The mission has impacted not only Jessica and her parents but has also influenced her older son who wants to become a pilot.

This year's 30th anniversary celebration at *Wine Flight* raised more than any other Angel Flight Central fundraiser, netting $640,000 and counting.

Guests had the privilege of watching a special video tribute highlighting Jim and Jessica's story at Wine Flight this year. They invite you to enjoy the video here.

From a single idea and a $3,000 grant to thousands of flights of hope each year, Angel Flight Central continues to carry forward the same mission Jim envisioned nearly thirty years ago—to connect people through compassion and flight. Jessica's journey and Jim's courage remain part of their DNA, proof that kindness knows no limit. But they need your help. They need the community to be its eyes and ears to reach those who may be in need. Help them save patients long hours in the car—trading for more hours with family. As long as there are people in need of care beyond their reach, Angel Flight Central will be there answering the call.



About the Author

Jenna Gerdes is Angel Flight Central's current Director of Development and Outreach where she uses her passion and vision to advance the organization's mission of providing free flights for people in need. Jenna holds her Master in Social Work degree from the University of... Read More...



Aero Crew Solutions is a group of professionals committed to providing you outstanding service to solve your employment needs. We do this by hosting job fairs throughout the United States. We also provide various career services that include career consulting, application review, interview prep and résumé services.

Career Services

Application Review Career Consulting

Résumé Critique Interview Prep

Monthly Newsletter

AeroCrewSolutions.com Mail@AeroCrewSolutions.com