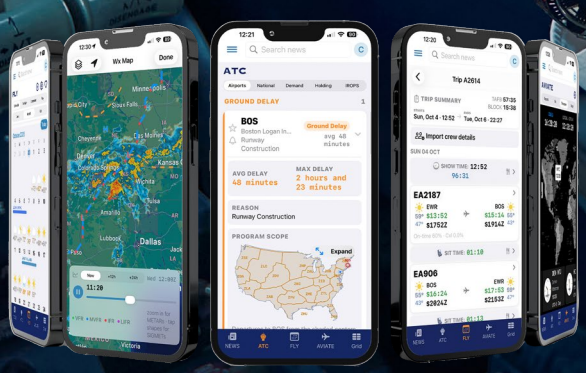
November 2026

Aero Crew News™

Your Industry Connection

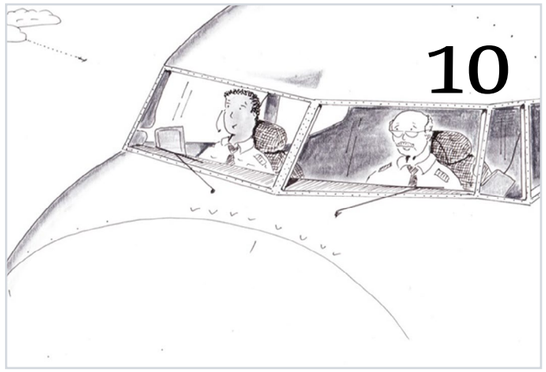


The last aviation app you need.

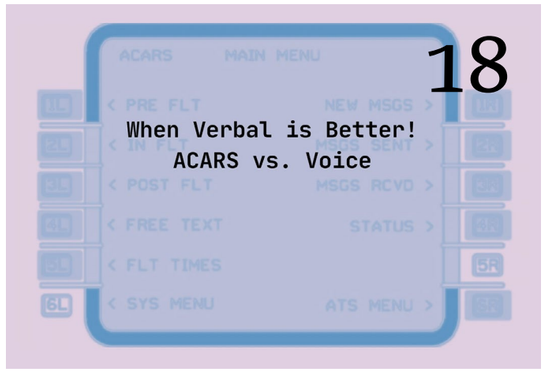
contents

November 2026

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











Also Featuring:

Letter from the Publisher	4
Aviator Bulletins	6
Avoiding Comparisons	12
Aircraft Certification	14
Does Training Get Easier?	16
How to Train Your Phone (and Reclaim Your Mind)	24
How to Become a Very Wealthy and Financially Successful Professional Pilot	31
The Pilot Pay Raise Trap: Don't Let Your Lender Qualify You on Yesterday's Income	38

the grid

Visit the grid online:
www.aerocrewnews.com/acn-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 Cargo Regional

Alpine Air
Empire Airlines

US Charter

Airshare
Alaska Seaplanes
GMJ Air Shuttle
Key Lime Air
Omni Air International
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
Sun Country Airlines
United Airlines

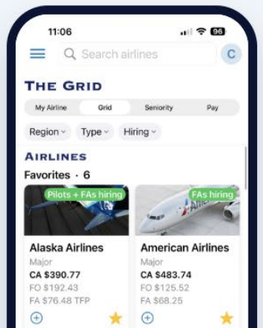
US Regional Airlines

Air Choice One
Air Wisconsin
Cape Air
CommutAir
Endeavor Air
Envoy
GoJet Airlines
Grant Aviation
Horizon Air
Key Lime Air
Mesa Airlines
Piedmont Airlines
PSA Airlines
Republic Airways
Silver Airways
SkyWest Airlines
Star Mariana Air, Inc.

NOW IN THE AERO CREW NEWS APP

the grid, in your pocket.

Contract comparisons, pay charts and company details for every airline on this page — side by side, with every data point flagged for freshness.



Tap any airline. Compare in seconds.

Download now on the App Store

7-day trial · Plus & Pro plans
AeroCrewNews.com/the-app

Android coming soon
Testers needed

Dear readers,

Somewhere this month, a family will sit down to Thanksgiving dinner on a Tuesday. Or a Saturday. Or the Sunday after, with the turkey reheated and the kids already thinking about school in the morning. And somewhere else, one of you will be eating yours out of a crew-room microwave between legs, or at a layover hotel restaurant serving a "holiday special" to a table of strangers in their finest overnight clothes.

That's Thanksgiving in this business. The rest of the country goes home for the holiday, and we're the reason they get there. The calendar says the fourth Thursday. The bid says otherwise.

So, before the busiest travel stretch of the year gets going, a few thank-yous are in order. To the gate agents who will absorb a lot of frustration that isn't theirs. To the ramp crews and mechanics working in the cold and dark so the first wave can push on time. To the dispatchers, crew schedulers, cleaners and caterers nobody in back ever sees. To the pilots and flight attendants who will fly full airplanes through the holiday so that everyone else's family can be whole at the table. And most of all, to the families who move the holiday to fit a schedule and never make you feel guilty for it. They're flying this trip too.

As the year winds down, I also want to thank you. Aero Crew News has been around since 2015, and it exists because you read it, share it, and send us the stories that matter to the people who actually do this job. That has never been something we take for granted.

This year we also put Aero Crew News in your pocket. The Aero Crew News app brings our coverage together with tools built for a trip day: ATC delays and ground stops, your schedule at a glance, and The Grid, our airline-by-airline look at the industry. There's now a free version, so there's nothing standing between you and a download. Find it on the App Store and tell us what you'd like it to do next.

However your Thanksgiving lands this year, whether it's at home, at the layover, or somewhere over the middle of the country, I hope you find a few minutes to enjoy it with the people who matter. And if you're working it, thank you for getting everyone else home.

Thank you, as always, for trusting us to be part of your career.

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 Bachelor 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 12,000 hours of flying time since his introductory flight on November 14th, 1992.

BACK TO CONTENTS

October 2026

Feature – Project Aviator is doing worthy work in mentorship and scholarship in furtherance of their aspirations to be unique, personal and impactful.

Product Feature – Finally, CrewSIM is the answer to connectivity issues giving us internet for everyone on every layover — and it's amazingly affordable.

Baggage – You are more than a pilot, but you may need help building that identity. Here are some valuable tactics.

Business Vector – The increasing challenges of staffing a corporate flight department are numerous and there is no single solution.

Coffee & Pretzels – Aerobatics in a jetliner? Funny/not funny!

Desk One – Every crew should be aware that ACARS messages are not private.

Fitness – The way your body uses calories adjusts. Learn why and discover how to compensate and drop that stubborn weight.

Grey Matter – That "cushion of air" phenomenon you encounter on landing feels impenetrable.

Money – Our "money guys" explain that zero-closing-cost mortgage opportunity. (And be sure to read this month's Mortgage article, too.)

Mortgage – Facing a move? The right lender who understands the unique position pilots are in can save money, headaches and truly benefit your housing situation.

Perspectives – Follow along as our ascending flight instructor prepares for his first airline training.

SkyWatch – The "quiet skies" of autumn are explained by our astronomer.



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
Sergio Sovero
Andrew Ross
Laura Laster
Scott Darragh
Reini Thijssen
Charlie Mattingly
Jonathan Kulak
Christopher Broyhill

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

© 2026 Aero Crew News, All Rights Reserved.



FAA Certifies 737 MAX 10 With Redesigned AOA System That Addresses MCAS Failure Mode

The FAA has certificated the Boeing 737 MAX 10, the largest variant in the MAX family and the first commercial aircraft certified under the 2020 Aircraft Certification, Safety, and Accountability Act (ACSAA). Read More



American Airlines Dispatchers and Operations Specialists Approve New 5-Year Contract

The Professional Airline Flight Control Association (PAFCA) announced that American's nearly 600 dispatchers and operations specialists have approved a new five-year contract. Read More



World's Largest Pilots Union Charts Future Path, Elects National Leadership Team

The Board of Directors of the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA) reelected Capt. Jason Ambrosi to a second four-year term as president and set the union's priorities for the years ahead, from requiring ADS-B In on every airliner to keeping two pilots on the flightdeck at all times. Read More

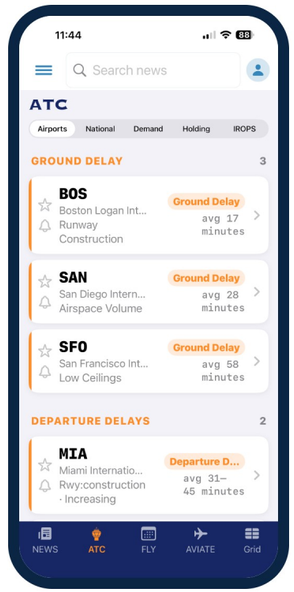
BACK TO CONTENTS

@AERO CREW NEWS®
The last aviation APP you need

Delays, pay, weather, hotel, layover, food. Covered.

Aviation news, live ATC delays, aviation weather, pay and contract data, plus your trips leg by leg.

NEW · FREE TIER Start free. Upgrade anytime.



News
Aero Crew News stories and breaking aviation news.

ATC
Ground stops, delay programs and enroute restrictions, airport by airport.

The Grid
Pay and contract data across airlines, side by side.

AVIATE
Aviation weather and NOTAMs, plus study cards to stay sharp.

FLY
Your trips leg by leg: filed routes checked against delay programs, METAR/TAF at every stop, your overnights laid out, and layover guides for wherever you land.

Download free on iPhone
Search "Aero Crew News" on the App Store
aerocrewnews.com/the-app
Android in testing — testers wanted. Sign up at the link above.
AERO CREW NEWS APP · powered by CrewDesk, LLC
SCAN TO GET IT



United Delivers Record 17% Revenue Growth in Q3, and Expects Record Q4 Revenue Growth, Underpinned by Accelerating Customer Investments

United Airlines reported pre-tax earnings of $1.3 billion, with a pre-tax margin of 7.3%. Adjusted pre-tax earnings were $1.1 billion, with an adjusted pre-tax margin of 6.2%. Fuel expense was up $1.8 billion compared to third-quarter 2025... Read More



American Sets New Revenue Records Amid Historic Fuel Cost Pressure

American Airlines Group Inc. reported its third-quarter 2026 financial results, reflecting execution of its commercial strategy and the benefits of long-term investments in its customers, team members, network, fleet and technology. Read More



Southwest Airlines Reports Third Quarter 2026 Results; Record Revenue Performance Drives Year-Over-Year Margin Expansion

Southwest Airlines Co. reported third quarter 2026 financial results, reflecting strong demand for the Southwest product and continued momentum across the business. Read More



Horizon Air Pilots Picket at SEA and BOI, Cite Four Years Without a Contract

Horizon Air pilots represented by Teamsters Local 1224 held an informational picket October 14 at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and Boise Airport, demanding the carrier end what the union calls delay tactics and agree to a fair collective bargaining agreement. Read More



Army Report Underscores Why Congress Must Finish the Job on ADS-B In

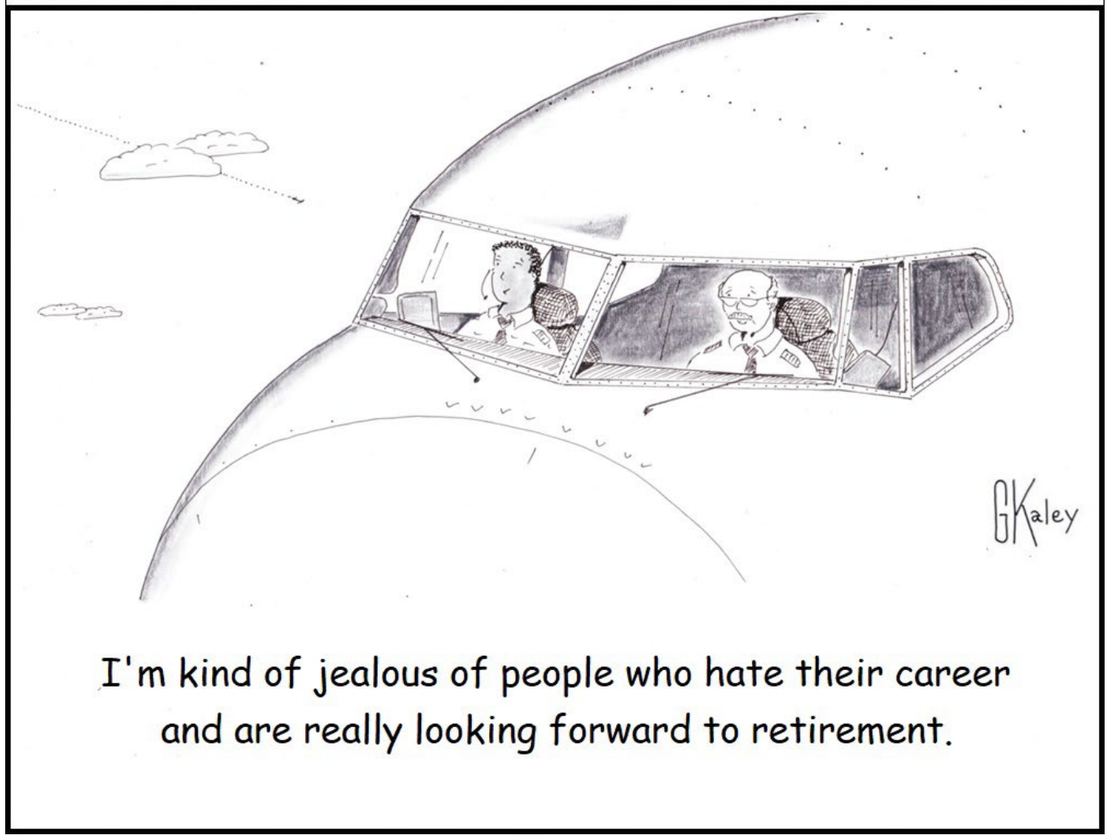
Following the release of the U.S. Army's report on the PSA Flight 5342 midair collision, Capt. Jason Ambrosi, president of the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA), issued the following statement calling on Congress to require integrated ADS-B In technology for civilian and... Read More



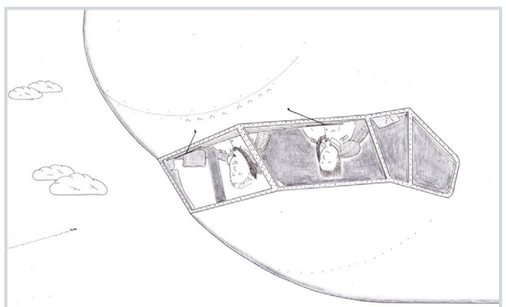
U.S. Supreme Court Denies Certification in United Airlines' Appeal, Clearing Way for Historic Class Action Lawsuit Regarding Religious Discrimination

Plaintiffs and class representatives in the landmark religious liberty/reasonable accommodation lawsuit, Sambrano v. United Airlines, announce... Read More

coffee & pretzels



I'm kind of jealous of people who hate their career and are really looking forward to retirement.



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



PERSPECTIVES

Avoiding Comparisons

It's where you are in your career that matters.

Written by: John McDermott

The commercial aviation industry has been through a whirlwind over the last six years. Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States full-force in 2020, the airline industry has been through a feast-or-famine cycle that leaves many of us feeling a certain level of whiplash. Looking back on the experience, notably from the perspective of a professional pilot still very much at the start of his career, it is critical to put one's career in perspective and avoid a keeping-up-with-the-Joneses cycle that is often counterproductive.

I took my discovery flight in September 2019 and started full-time flight training in July 2020. At the time, optimistic estimates put the start of the travel rebound sometime between 2023 and 2025, and there were questions of whether travel would ever recover to pre-pandemic levels.

Those guesses were very wrong, and the rebound between mid-2021 and early 2023 kicked off a hiring spree that the industry has never seen before and may never see again. A breathtaking wave of new pilots was created to fill the gap, and despite airline hiring having somewhat recovered to pre-pandemic levels, the 2025 U.S. airman statistics show that we continue to create a record number of private and commercial pilots, as well as flight instructors.

This has created a market wherein, at every level, pilots are fighting harder than they had expected to get jobs. Flight schools, regional airlines, and major airlines have somewhat tapered their hiring (despite the anticipation of newly certified 737 MAX planes and an upcoming wave of retirements), and I have heard frustration from pilots at each level who expected to be moving to the next stage of their careers sooner.

I appreciate where these pilots are coming from, and I must admit that to some extent, I have fallen into the trap myself. Hearing about bygone hiring eras as recounted by pilots senior to me and seeing others post their accomplishments online can make it easy to fall into frustration, irrespective of what my situation is really like.

Lately, I have made it a goal to take a step back and appreciate the place I have come to in my own career. No matter where you find yourself, or what your career goals are, I believe this to be an important practice that must not be overlooked. No matter how exciting or grim the situation may feel, gratitude is a critical part of any aviation career — any success, for that matter.

I believe that pilots who are new to the industry see a system that allows for lightning-fast progression to the top of the aviation pyramid. My impression is that many people who feel stuck in their positions (whether working as a flight instructor beyond 1500 hours or flying for a regional or LCC) are not as far behind in that progression as they may feel.

Many of our predecessors experienced countless furloughs, mergers, recessions and accidents that slowed growth and career progression, yet they have still been able to lead fruitful, successful careers. No matter how often I feel behind or worry about not "making it" early enough, I must remember that I am still fortunate in an enviable position — even if I am stagnant for the rest of my career.

There are a number of ways I remind myself of this on a day-to-day basis. I strive to take a moment, at least once a week if not more, to stop and look around to appreciate the present moment. Relatively easily, I recall moments for which I can be grateful. This does wonders for keeping up my spirits.

I have also limited my social media activity, a practice that helps keep me from comparing and stressing over where I am in relation to others. This allows me to focus specifically on my own goals, career, and situation. Worrying about my place relative to others' accomplishments diminishes how my strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities differ from others; these differences must not be taken as value issues, and I must remind myself that it does not make my achievements any less significant.

I encourage other pilots working their way through the ranks, no matter where they are in their careers, to take part in critical mindfulness practices. Different methods work for different people, but I find that taking time to appreciate the journey and each step along the way makes my career much more meaningful. I have enjoyed my flying time more when I have stopped to appreciate my current situation; and as I look back, I realize in retrospect, that I am much fonder of each step than I felt in the moment.

Do not agonize over which career path looks best nor worry about what milestone needs to occur when. If you are making progress towards your ultimate goal, no matter how long it takes or where anybody else is in their own journey, the details of a fantastic career will take care of themselves. In the meantime, get into the sky and enjoy going flying.



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...



KNOWLEDGE BASE

Aircraft Certification

Written by: Sergio Sovero

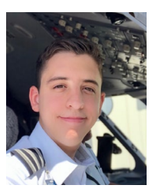
In the United States, the FAA is ultimately responsible to oversee the safety, design, production, and airworthiness of all U.S. civil aviation products. Aircraft-type certification in the United States is governed by 14 CFR Part 21, with transport-category airplanes required to demonstrate compliance with applicable 14 CFR Part 25 airworthiness standards. Up to eight phases of testing and certification are required for an aircraft to be certified, beginning with the application. The length of time can vary significantly, and ranges from five to seven years. Manufacturers must complete extensive engineering analyses, ground testing, flight testing, and safety evaluations before receiving approval. An aircraft that is a modification of an existing certified model may take considerably less time, often two to four years, depending on the changes involved.

Perhaps the most interesting phases are both the ground and flight testing. During ground testing, manufacturers evaluate the structural strength, landing gear, engines, flight controls, electrical systems, and emergency equipment under normal and extreme conditions. During flight testing, specially instrumented aircraft are flown through a wide range of scenarios, including stalls, engine failures, high-speed operations, crosswind landings, icing conditions, and emergency procedures. Both FAA and manufacturer flight-test pilots and engineers are involved in ground and flight tests.

When it comes to evacuation certification, the full aircraft must be evacuated within 90 seconds. For such a test, under 14 CFR §25.803, only half of the emergency exits are used. Such a scenario simulates inoperable emergency slides or blocked/unusable exits. This rule applies to any aircraft with a capacity exceeding 44 passengers. The evacuation is completed when the last occupant reaches the ground, stand or ramp.

Given the critical role of aircraft engines on flight safety, engines undergo rigorous testing simulating extreme conditions. These include bird ingestion, water and hail ingestion, and extreme temperature and altitude exposure. An engine can be destroyed during a certification test and still pass. What matters is whether the damage remains within the safety limits established by the FAA. Engineers inspect the damaged engine, analyze high-speed footage and sensor data, identify the failure mechanism, and determine whether design modifications are necessary.

The process of aircraft certification has the safety of the traveling public at its core and represents the culmination of thousands of hours of testing, engineering validation, and regulatory scrutiny, providing the technical foundation for an aircraft to safely enter into commercial service.



About the Author

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



United Airlines Boeing 787 Dreamliner and United Express Embraer 175 taxi on the runway at ORD
Editorial photo credit: MKPhoto - stock.adobe.com

Does Training Get Easier?

Looking back on three type ratings

Written by: Andrew Ross

It's a very common question I hear from students in college and newer airline pilots who have just completed their first type rating. "Does this get easier?" It's a tough question to answer because, as with everything in aviation, it depends on you. How you study, how you handle stress, how you work with someone you have never met, how you prioritize what you need to study and when. All these things depend on you and how you learn best.

I recently completed my third type rating in the wonderful Boeing 787. Previously, I had flown the Boeing 757/767, and my first type rating was in the Embraer 145. I can confidently say, that after the 145 and 757/767 training, I was more than happy to avoid the schoolhouse for a few years. Between the first and second type ratings, I remember the difficulty being somewhat similar. For the 145, I was still overwhelming myself with learning everything I could about the airplane.

How many rivets did it have down the spar of the wing? How, exactly, did the hydraulic demand reservoir work? Could I build the bleed system from when a molecule of air went into the low stage compressor section bleed tap?

Consumed by my belief that we needed to build the plane, I let certain aspects of the training program linger until a deadline approached. This added a lot of stress later in training but was accomplished, nonetheless. Instead of listening to my instructor's repeated claims that we needed to know limitations, flows, memory items, and profiles by heart, I was focused on my old way of training. This led to a lot of unnecessarily expended energy. "Focus on the big level items and we will teach the intricacies later," was the airline's training center motto.

Fast forward to my next type rating eight years later. Certainly, a new airline and a much larger airplane would be stricter and would want me to build the airplane from scratch? Nope. Same story different city. Limitations, memory items, profiles, flows, procedures, and high-level systems knowledge. The gist of this "high-level systems knowledge" is that you only need to know the basic outline of the system, and then know what happens when you select a button associated with that system, or what the warning lights mean for that system. Even though I was now learning a completely new airplane from a different manufacturer, I was still told the same mantra. Okay, I focused and trimmed what I studied.

The result was a successful course with much less studying and stressful nights. But also, I started to see a pattern in the knowledge. Most airplanes are certified following the exact same guidelines. And most airplanes are using the same parts and systems logic (and even engines). You find that the icing limitations for engines on the ground are fairly universal, and that most hydraulic systems are pressurized to 3000 psi (except the 787). You recognize that profiles, memory items, and how checklists read also "rhyme." They may not be exact, but they are very similar.

After my third type rating on the 787, I can confidently report that it does, in fact, get easier. But there is a catch. You must be honest with yourself after each type rating and build upon what worked for you during your training and consider what didn't. For me, I have focused more and more on the operational aspects of flying the airplane versus building the systems on the aircraft. This is not to say that systems don't have their place, but long ago we figured out that knowing how to build a 787 and knowing how to fly the 787 are two very separate things.

For more tips on studying and how the training at a major airline works, pick up a copy of our book *The Airline Transition Manual* and set your gameplan for training.



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...

DESK ONE

When Verbal is Better! ACARS vs. Voice

Written by: Laura Laster

Last month, you read how ACARS (Aircraft Communications Addressing & Reporting System) data is public and easily accessible. While ACARS *is* a great link between crews and dispatchers, it has its limits. Let's start by thinking about communications and clarity. Anyone who texts routinely with people of varying age groups will notice some age groups include more emojis to attempt to convey meaning. My two teenagers loathe calling someone on the phone to talk (except for older relatives, who don't like to text). We're working collectively on helping them get comfortable with verbal phone calls.

The statistics we hear on what percent of communication is verbal / non-verbal / the words themselves (38% / 55% / 7% respectively) are debated and used to "prove" that non-verbal communication is extremely important for understanding. (Go to https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/beyond-words/201109/is-nonverbal-communication-a-numbers-game to read more on the debate.) Rarely addressed is how handicapped pilots and dispatchers are merely using the words themselves in text-based communication. How often have you had a misunderstanding with someone over what they said in a text, because the tone of voice was lacking?

What's even worse, when using ACARS, is the nearly universal lack of emotion we can express. My iPhone has about 3,870 emojis (apparently accounting for various skin tones)! With ACARS, there's pretty much no emojis! The system lacks what we love using on phone texts to attempt to add "tone" to our words. How often have you yelled "OK" to someone in a happy tone versus an angry or frustrated tone? Over text, it just isn't clear what "OK" really means!

Recently, while talking with other dispatchers, I learned some dispatchers and flight crew attempt to use only ACARS for involved, complicated discussions. As I've experienced with my own teenagers, it may seem more appealing to younger dispatchers to default to ACARS for sorting out problems.

Most of the time, ACARS is just fine for simple messages. But, if a dispatcher has lots of information to describe or provide, it is often faster to just talk directly to the crew. Each party in the communication benefits from hearing tone of voice and using that context. A key aspect of tone includes recognizing the other person's willingness to go along with – or reject – the proposed plan.

With irregular operations, voice can really save time, reduce confusion, and stop frustration. If a thunderstorm moves through a hub, the dispatcher may have multiple flights due to land within ten to 20 minutes of each other. When all four flights are assigned holding within a short period, the dispatcher must quickly reach all the flights with updated fuel numbers and agree on contingency plans. If the dispatcher tries to send all these updates by ACARS, they can be confused with potentially information being sent to the wrong flight. But if the dispatcher uses voice-over radio, all flights will hopefully hear the general conversations and understand the dispatcher's workload in providing holding fuel updates. As a bonus, each flight can hear the other's instructions and gain added context for the weather and holding situation. To reiterate, tone is key. Crews can hear confidence (or lack of confidence) in voice plans with dispatchers. Each person involved can feel out the other's perspective more easily over voice, especially when information must be received quickly.

Communication is best when dispatchers put themselves in the flight crew's place and view their role in making the crew's flight operate more smoothly, while enhancing safety. Dispatchers have a huge advantage of normal keyboards and quick typing skills, while flight crews are frequently stuck with rudimentary keypads with non-standard layouts and almost no punctuation. Dispatchers need to understand that sometimes the crew is going to take a while to respond by text, and insisting on long/complicated conversations held over ACARS has great potential for frustration.

So, if you're a dispatcher, get comfortable using the radio (or satphone, if available). Before launching into complicated conversations over ACARS, stop and consider using voice. Ask yourself how you can make the flight crew's life easier.



About the Author

Laura Laster graduated from LeTourneau University in 2004, becoming a flight instructor for the university. She then worked for Dynamic Aviation as a King Air survey pilot and eventually worked at Dynamic Airways during their air carrier certification for Part 121 Supplemental operations... Read More...



Pilots Hide Things From Their AME and Congress Just Admitted Why

Mental health gets the headlines, but the same culture of silence impacts our metabolic health.

Written by: Capt. Scott Darragh, NASM-CPT, CNC

Pilots hide things from their AME. It isn't because we're dishonest. It's because for decades the system taught us that being honest could cost us a career.

That's no longer just hangar-talk opinion. In late September, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed two bipartisan bills to modernize how the FAA handles mental health and medications for pilots and air traffic controllers. The bills now go to the House. Whatever happens there, Washington is saying out loud what crew rooms have known for years: the culture of silence around pilot health is a safety problem.

Here's what the bills do, and why the same silence is quietly wrecking our metabolic health.

Part 1: What the Senate Actually Passed

Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) led both bills, with bipartisan support that includes Sen. John Hoeven (R-N.D.).

1. The John A. Hauser Mental Health in Aviation Act (S. 3257). It's named for a University of North Dakota aviation student who died in 2021. The bill would require the FAA to:

- Update its Part 67 medical certification rules within 18 months of the bill becoming law.
- Review the Mental Health Special Issuance process on a recurring basis. That includes checking whether more medications and treatments can be accepted, and whether specially trained AMEs can issue more certificates themselves instead of sending every case to Oklahoma City.
- Spend up to $15 million a year through fiscal 2028 to recruit and train more AMEs, including psychiatrists, and to cut the special issuance backlog.
- Within two years, adopt the recommendations of the FAA's own 2024 Mental Health and Aviation Medical Clearances Aviation Rulemaking Committee, or explain to Congress why it didn't.
- Run a public campaign to reduce the stigma around receiving care.

2. The Aviation Medication Transparency Act (S. 3258). Within one year, the FAA would have to publish plain-language guidance on prescription and over-the-counter medications through MedXPress. It would cover "Do Not Issue" and "Do Not Fly" designations and any required wait periods before flying. In practice, you'd no longer have to guess whether the allergy pill in your flight bag is a problem.

Why now? A 2023 Department of Transportation Inspector General report found that pilots starting an antidepressant can wait more than a year for FAA authorization. According to reporting on the bills, about 20% of pilots and controllers are initially disqualified after reporting a mental health issue. Controllers can be pulled from work for three months just for changing an antidepressant dose.

ALPA President Capt. Jason Ambrosi summed it up: "Seeking mental health care should be viewed not as a career risk but as a professional responsibility."

What it doesn't do yet: This isn't law. The House passed its own version in September 2025, and the two versions must be reconciled before anything reaches the President. Nothing about your next medical changes this month.

What has changed is the conversation. Congress is officially acknowledging that when pilots are afraid to get care, they stop getting care. That fear isn't limited to mental health.

BACK TO CONTENTS

Part 2: The Same Silence Is Costing Us Our Metabolic Health

A 2022 study in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* surveyed 3,765 pilots:

- **56.1%** had avoided healthcare out of fear of losing their medical certificate.
- **45.7%** had looked for informal care instead of seeing a doctor.
- **26.8%** had withheld or misrepresented information on a health questionnaire.

Read those numbers again. More than half of us are avoiding the doctor.

Mental health gets the headlines, but a pilot who won't see a therapist usually isn't getting bloodwork either. And metabolic problems are the quiet kind. We're great at handling emergencies in the cockpit. We're terrible at noticing the slow ones inside our own bodies:

- **Blood pressure** creeping up a few points every year.
- **A1C** drifting from "fine" to "watch it."
- **Sleep** stuck at five hours on a four-day trip.
- **Brain fog** that we start calling normal.

Here's the catch: these are exactly the issues that eventually will show up on your medical. The FAA's blood pressure ceiling is 155/95. Diabetes that needs medication means special issuance. A high BMI triggers screening for sleep apnea. The difference between catching these while they're still trending and catching them once they're diagnosed is huge. Early usually means lifestyle changes. Late usually means medication, paperwork and a special issuance.

8 signs of insulin resistance that crews often dismiss:

1. Stubborn belly fat
2. Falling asleep after meals
3. The 2-3 p.m. energy crash
4. Sugar cravings in hotel rooms
5. Brain fog
6. High triglycerides
7. Waking up exhausted
8. A waistband that gets tighter every year

None of these diagnose anything on its own. They're reasons to get checked, not reasons to panic.

This isn't a discipline problem. I've sat in the same seat you have. The eat-less-move-more crowd has never tried it through a time-zone change, an airport food court at 2200, a wrecked circadian rhythm and eight hours of sitting. You're not lazy. Your body is working against conditions that were never designed for it. That's why generic meal plans fail airline crews.

Part 3: What to Do Before Your Next Medical

Congress fixing the system is years away. **Here's what you can do now:**

1. **Know your numbers.** Ask your primary care provider for fasting glucose, fasting insulin, A1C and a lipid panel. The triglyceride-to-HDL ratio is an underrated early warning sign. Buy a home blood pressure cuff and check a few mornings a week.
2. **Check your medications and supplements today.** The FAA already publishes "Do Not Issue" and "Do Not Fly" lists in the AME Guide. Don't wait for the new law to find out.
3. **Talk to your AME before there's a problem.** Walk in with data and a plan, not a surprise. AMEs deal with trending numbers all the time. What gets pilots into trouble is what goes unaddressed or unreported.
4. **Use the support that already exists.** If you're struggling mentally, union peer support programs such as ALPA Pilot Peer Support and the HIMS program exist so you have somewhere confidential to start. Using them is the professional move.
5. **Always tell the truth on MedXPress.** Getting information early is about fixing problems while they're small, never about hiding them.

The Senate did its part last month. Our part is to stop waiting until a problem is obvious. Protect your medical by protecting your health. The weight loss is usually the byproduct, not the starting point.

This column is educational only. It does not replace medical or mental health treatment, and pilots must comply with all FAA medical reporting requirements.



About the Author

Scott Darragh is a Boeing 737 Captain and the founder of Jet Set Trainer, a metabolic health coaching company for pilots, flight crew, and frequent travelers. He holds NASM-CPT and CNC certifications. 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

BAGGAGE

How to Train Your Phone (and Reclaim Your Mind)

Written by: Reini Thijssen



Our phones are remarkable tools. They connect us with the people we love when on a trip, help us stay organized and manage our daily tasks, and provide instant access to an abundance of knowledge. However, for many of us, our phone use needs some boundaries. Excessive screen time triggers dopamine highs and crashes, which are linked to worsened memory, “brain rot,” anxiety, and heightened stress levels. Does that mean we should disconnect completely and go entirely offline? Maybe not. Studies show that even partial digital detoxes can significantly lower stress and increase attention spans. This article offers tools to reclaim your attention and reshape your relationship with your screen.

Think of your phone as a dog. A dog brings joy, companionship, and energy into your life. It motivates you to get outside and helps establish routines. However, if you never set boundaries, your dog will happily take over your entire day. The dog will demand another walk, another treat, and ask for more attention.

Your device operates the same way. It is always sitting there, ready for attention, offering an endless stream of messages, news, social media, and algorithmic rewards. If you allow it, it will fill every moment of your day. One notification becomes ten minutes of scrolling; one quick social media check becomes an hour of fractured attention. The problem is not that we have a phone. The problem is that many of us have forgotten how to maintain a healthy, intentional relationship with it.

Chronic Stress

We all feel it: the social expectation that you need to be instantly available to everyone, at all hours of the day, the anxiety of having your battery almost empty at the end of a long day, and the compulsive habit of opening the same app you closed thirty seconds ago.

As a pilot during layovers, your phone is often your only link to home. But dealing with family stress or constantly checking for extra work trips — especially during rest time — keeps your body stuck in “work mode.” In addition, the habit of checking your phone does not automatically stop when you walk into the flight deck. The impulse to check your phone becomes an automatic reflex, and now you might be spending mental energy actively resisting that “itch.” That constant internal battle creates unnecessary stress when focus and safety matter most.

As useful as phones are, they have introduced chronic stress into our daily lives. Research increasingly shows a clear connection between smartphone use and heightened stress levels. Instead of relaxing, we attempt to numb ourselves by hours of mindless, hyper-stimulating, short-term content that harms our dopamine receptors (better known as “brain-rot”). We
think we are unwinding, but we are actually leaving our brains overstimulated and unable to recharge.

Digital Detox?

The question is whether complete restriction is the most sustainable way to reduce phone use. The term “digital detox” makes it seem as if they are harmful substances we need to avoid as much as possible. Yet our phones are also incredibly useful tools in our society that make many parts of life easier. Trying to completely escape the digital world is not only exhausting, but it is also unrealistic.

Instead, we can look through a different lens: focusing on a more balanced relationship with our phones by creating healthier boundaries and using technology more intentionally.

Your Phone as a Tool

Back to the dog analogy. A smart dog owner does not let the dog dictate their schedule. The owner decides when it is time to walk, when it is time to play, and when it is time for rest. The same psychological principle applies to your technology: you decide when it is time to “walk the dog.”

Instead of reaching for your device every time it asks for attention, create intentional, structured blocks for phone use:

- **Batch your communications:** Check and reply to messages at specific, designated intervals vs. treating every text like an emergency.
- **Schedule your dopamine:** Set aside distinct windows for social media or news consumption.

- **Audit your utility:** Prioritize using your phone for active, meaningful tasks rather than passive, mindless consumption.
- **Establish screen-free spaces:** Put your phone entirely out of sight during high-value moments such as sleep, meals, or face-to-face conversations with the people right in front of you.

Without these structural boundaries, your nervous system does not receive a sign that it is safe to down-regulate. Like an anxious dog following you from room to room, a phone without setting any boundaries follows you everywhere: into your bedroom, your meals, your relationships, and your thoughts.

"Digital Nutrition"

The dog analogy helps us understand ***how*** we interact with our screens; the concept of **digital nutrition** helps us evaluate ***what*** we do when we are on them. Psychologist Jocelyn Brewer originally coined the term "digital nutrition" to describe a healthier, more conscious approach to technology.

A healthy relationship with food is about choosing what nourishes you and limiting what leaves you feeling depleted. Think of your phone use as sugar: most people do not need to eliminate sugar to be healthy but eating chocolate all day will make you feel sick. It helps to distinguish between digital activities that serve as nourishing meals and those that act as empty calories:

Nutritious Digital Consumption	Digital Junk Food
Calling a friend to catch up	Endless, aimless scrolling through algorithmic feeds
Learning a new skill or listening to an educational podcast	Reactively checking notifications out of boredom or discomfort
Using utility tools (maps, budgeting, scheduling)	Engaging in online comparisons that trigger inadequacy
Intentionally staying connected with family and friends	Consuming sensationalized content without purpose

Research from Georgetown University (2025) suggests that we do not need extreme restriction to see the benefits. Their study found that even partial digital detoxes (reducing screen time or limiting access to certain apps or the internet) significantly improved sleep, reduced anxiety, and restored our cognitive ability to sustain attention. This means that we do not need to eliminate our phones entirely, but that we need a balanced digital diet.

Three Principles of Behavioral Alignment

Re-establishing authority over your device can be built around three mindfulness-based ideas.

1. Be Mindful
Pay attention to your habits. Notice the exact internal state you are in when you reach for your phone on autopilot. Are you checking it because you need information, or because you are feeling bored, anxious, uncomfortable, or lonely? Use built-in screen-time tools to gather objective data on where you spend your attention.

No need to download anything new; your device already has built-in usage tools. If you use an iPhone, check **Screen Time** (*Settings > Screen Time*) to see your notification activity and app-usage breakdown, or to set App Limits and Downtime.

On Android, navigate to **Digital Wellbeing** (*Settings > Digital Wellbeing*) to review, set App Timers, and activate Bedtime Mode.

2. Be Meaningful
Before you open your phone, run through a quick, three-second mental checklist:
- Why am I picking this up right now?
- What specific task do I want to accomplish?
- When will I put it back down?

Consciously choosing to scroll for fifteen minutes to relax is an autonomous choice; losing an hour because you opened an app without purpose is a lost opportunity for cognitive rest.

3. Balance
Create balance with your phone.

- Turn off all non-human notifications (likes, news alerts, game updates)
- Move distracting, high-dopamine apps (TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts) off your home screen into folders or access them only via a web browser to create a boundary.
- Keep your phone physically out of reach during meals and social gatherings.
- Set a boundary around work communications outside of professional hours.
- **Pro tip for pilots:** Continuous checking of schedule bidding, open trips, or company communication prevents your brain from shifting out of work mode.
    - For example, protect your free time and rest by setting cut-off times for bidding. If you serve on-call status, consider a separate work phone or utilizing dedicated focus modes so that operational alerts don't take over your personal time.

Protect Mornings and Evenings

The beginning and end of your day are important periods that heavily influence your baseline stress levels. Instead of flooding your brain with cortisol-inducing headlines and notifications the second you open your eyes, give your nervous system a chance to wake up naturally. Allow yourself to stretch, drink coffee, walk, journal, or be in a quiet room for the first 30 minutes of the day.

At night, your mind requires a deliberate transition into deep, restorative sleep. Keeping your device out of the bedroom creates a clean, physical separation between the daily demands and time for recovery. Consider bringing back a standalone alarm clock for your nightstand.

Exercise 1: The 24-Hour Audit

To help you transition from theory to practice, try this simple, low-pressure **24-Hour Attention Audit**. No need to change anything about your phone use yet; the goal here is purely curiosity and observation, not judgment.

Step 1: 3-Second Pause
For the next 24 hours, every single time you reach for your phone, pause with your hand on the screen for three seconds before unlocking it. Ask yourself one question:

"What feeling or need prompted this reach?"
- **Is it functional?** (e.g., *I need to check the weather, respond to a friend, or find directions.*)
- **Is it emotional?** (e.g., *I am feeling bored, anxious about a task, lonely, or mentally fatigued.*)

On a sticky note or in a notebook, jot down a quick tally of how many times your reach was **functional** versus **emotional**.

Step 2: Classify Your Digital Diet
At the end of the day, open your phone's built-in screen time tracker. Look at your top three most-used apps and classify them using the "Digital Nutrition" framework:

1. **Nourishing Apps:** Did these leave you feeling connected, informed, or genuinely rested? (e.g., a meditation app, a phone call with a loved one, a language learning tool)
2. **Junk Food Apps:** Did these leave you feeling slightly drained, anxious, or numb? (e.g., endless scrolling on social media, checking the news)

Step 3: Choose One "Micro-Boundary"
Based on what you noticed, pick just **one** tiny boundary to experiment with for the next three days. Do not try to overhaul your entire life at once. For example:

- The Bedroom Ban: Charge your phone across the room or in the hallway overnight.
- The First 30: Don't check notifications or emails for the first 30 minutes after waking up.
- The Single-Screen Rule: When watching a movie or eating a meal, your phone must be out of reach.

Final Thoughts

Shifting behavioral habits takes time, patience, and self-compassion. There will be days when you spend more time online than you wanted, and days where the screen wins your attention. That is simply part of being human in a world engineered for distraction.

The goal is to step back into the role of the intentional decision-maker. Use your phone with purpose but protect the moments where you need to be fully present. There is no need to abandon technology, you just need to remember who is in charge.

Getting out of the digital loop and therefore managing chronic stress is a process you do not have to go through alone. If you are finding it difficult to set boundaries or feel overwhelmed, reach out to **Emerald Mental Health** via www.emeraldmentalhealth.com or reini@emeraldmentalhealth.com to learn more about professional counseling and coaching support.

Resources

Brewer, J. (n.d.). The digital nutrition philosophy: A guilt-free approach to screen time. https://jocelynbrewer.com/the-philosophy/

Georgetown University. (2025, November 10). *Digital detoxes work. Here's what reduced screen time can do for you.* https://www.georgetown.edu/news/digital-detox-reduce-screen-time-benefits/



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...



FREE MENTOR PROGRAM

UNBIASED INFO • CONNECT TO A GROWING NETWORK • SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Professional Pilots of Tomorrow (PPOT) is a mentor program comprised entirely of volunteers, and is designed to assist up-and-coming pilots make informed decisions regarding which airline or operator will best suit their needs.

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

We've created a community of thousands of pilots where aspiring aviators are well prepared to make the **critical early career decisions and lifestyle choices** unique to the aviation industry.

www.theppot.org info@theppot.org

MONEY

How to Become a Very Wealthy and Financially Successful Professional Pilot

Written by: Charlie Mattingly



A few years ago, I decided to re-attack the game of golf. In high school, my brother and I did little besides fish and play golf. Life was good! My goal is to someday return to that lifestyle — I've heard it's called retirement!

For me, golf is an incredibly difficult game to play well. As I've worked to reconstruct my swing, I've been blown away by all the new training gadgets, YouTube videos, and even AI instructors. In fact, I recently became so overwhelmed by swing tips, training aids, and techniques that I became significantly worse!

I'm pretty sure about a thousand thoughts were racing through my mind during my backswing. I was so confused that I didn't have a chance. Eventually, I had to turn off my favorite YouTube golf instructors, put away my training gadgets, and schedule a lesson with the local golf pro. Yes, a real human being to set my mind right! He gave me three simple things to work on, and I'm back on track to becoming a mediocre-to-average golfer.

As I thought about what to write for this month's Aero Crew News column, I realized that—much like becoming a scratch golfer—managing your finances can begin to feel overly complex and confusing. We're bombarded with financial gadgets and supposedly foolproof shortcuts to becoming rich and saving on taxes. In the process, we may be doing more harm than good to our overall financial health and prosperity.

I also thought about all the gimmicky strategies I might warn you to avoid — and a few that might be useful in very specific circumstances. In the end, I decided to focus on how to turn off the noise, reduce confusion, and concentrate on a handful of sound financial strategies. They aren't easy, but they have proved effective time and again. My goal is to explain, as simply as possible, how to become a financially successful, wealthy, and prosperous professional pilot.

Just like golf, personal finance offers an unlimited supply of gadgets that may or may not be worth your time. Golf marketers know that if they can convince me there's something I can buy to shortcut all the time and effort required to score well, I'll buy it! Unfortunately, nothing replaces time on the golf course and driving range. And by the way, the least exciting, least sexy part of the game is where you can make the biggest impact on your score — putting!

So, how do we know which financial strategies are legitimate and might help increase our net worth and which information is merely noise that could hurt our chances of building wealth? (Check out **Pilot Money Guys Podcast #133: 7 Money Moves That Can Help, Hurt or Trap You**.)

I thought it would be helpful to create a mental framework for sorting through all the noise bombarding us from the moment we get out of bed. I believe the following seven axioms can help us stay focused on what matters, reclaim our financial peace of mind, and enjoy financial success now and in the future:

1. Beware of financial media content that makes you angry or fearful!

The more content we consume, the more profitable its creators become. To keep us engaged longer, content producers know they must connect with us emotionally. When hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue are on the line, media companies will spare little effort learning how to hook our emotions. Fear and anger may be among the most effective marketing tools available to any media outlet or content creator.

Here is one last unsettling thought about media and advertisers. As the saying goes, they are not buying videos, posts, or entertainment; they are buying people — their attention, habits, emotions, and predictability. In other words, attention is the real commodity, and the product is you!

Check out Rahul JP's blog post on Medium if you want to learn more:

> "Virality does not measure truth, depth, or necessity. It measures engagement. And engagement often rewards outrage over reflection. This is where the contradiction of social media becomes impossible to ignore. Platforms market themselves as tools of empowerment while simultaneously extracting value from every second of human attention."

2. Be intentional and take the time to identify trustworthy sources of financial information.

There are excellent sources of unbiased financial information, but you must conduct your due diligence. Here's another challenging thought for us pilots: you may have to pay for good information through a subscription or professional advice. (I remember the good old days when a flight attendant would bring an old Wall Street Journal to the cockpit after a passenger left it behind. Sadly, those days appear to be gone!)

Here are a few sources I trust:

- Morningstar.com - Anything written by Christine Benz.
- The Wall Street Journal's Jason Zweig – Columnist for The Intelligent Investor.
- Also, check out Jason Zweig's book titled, *Your Money and Your Brain*.
- Vanguard.com is a great source of basic financial information, calculators, and economic updates.
- Best book for successful money mindset and habits – The Psychology of Money by Morgan Housel
- Best Financial Blog – A Wealth of Common Sense by Ben Carlson, CFA.
- Best financial podcast for professional pilots – The Pilot Money Guys (of course!)

3. Beware of blending your life insurance and investment strategies.

In general, strategies that mix investing with life insurance should make the hair on the back of your neck stand up. In my opinion, if you're evaluating a product that combines the two, pay for an unbiased opinion from a third party — or run, don't walk, in the other direction.

Any financial strategy that pays a large commission to the salesperson requires extra due diligence. These products can be difficult to understand — even for the salesperson — and should probably be avoided. Before buying, be sure you understand exactly how much the salesperson will be paid.

Listen for names and promises that sound too good to be true. Take "Infinite Banking," for example. That sounds wonderful — and evidently, I'm borrowing money from myself! Also, look for alternatives to the product being presented. A sales pitch usually emphasizes only the benefits of the proposed strategy. The salesperson may never mention that you could achieve the same (or better) results with strategies that don't involve the product being sold.

This sales tactic exploits our tendency to frame decisions too narrowly: Do I buy the car or not? Yes or no? Instead of a yes or no answer, maybe there are better alternatives — an airplane for commuting to the airport perhaps!?!

Chip and Dan Heath wrote about this challenge in their book, *Decisive*. They argue that our natural yes-or-no decision-making is often distorted by predictable biases. Their WRAP framework helps us make choices more thoughtfully and less reactively.

The *WRAP* Framework

1. **Widen Your Options**: Break out of narrow framing by generating alternatives, considering opportunity costs, and exploring multiple paths.
2. **Reality-Test Your Assumptions:** Actively seek disconfirming evidence, argue the opposite case, and challenge your initial logic.
3. **Attain Distance Before Deciding**: Step back emotionally and give yourself time. Ask, "If this choice disappeared, what would I do instead?"
4. **Prepare to Be Wrong:** Plan for alternate outcomes and contingencies to reduce overconfidence and improve resilience.

4. Ask whether the proposed strategy is playing to your ego by promising access to what "the wealthy" do.

We often hear about financial strategies supposedly available only to the ultra-high-net-worth, or that we should use a strategy because rich hedge-fund investors use it. If I'm honest, it feels good for a few seconds — an ego-driven dopamine hit — to imagine having access to something reserved for the ultra-wealthy. But I know that's my ego talking.

In investing, this is a familiar tactic called "status alignment" or "aspirational positioning." Some people are motivated by the desire to align themselves with successful, high-status groups. It works because people often want to resemble those they respect or envy. The pitch creates urgency: if wealthy people are doing it now, you don't want to be left behind. It also uses scarcity and exclusivity, implying that opting out means missing elite status.

Any financial or investment strategy that makes you feel like part of the financial elite is probably backed by a carefully designed sales strategy aimed at your ego. The ultra-wealthy use many strategies, but that fact alone says nothing about whether a strategy is appropriate—or likely to succeed—for your individual circumstances. In fact, many people believe this mix of apparent wealth and exclusivity helped Bernie Madoff grow his Ponzi scheme.

BACK TO CONTENTS

5. You must get good at adulting—there's no way around it.

Proudly, one of our clients recently emailed us to say that they had completed their estate planning with an attorney. At the young age of 40, they were finally getting good at "adulting." I loved it! There's no getting around it: as adults, we all have to do some financial planning, even if it's on the back of a bar napkin. Get a plan. Then understand that plans are often useless; the real value lies in the planning process.

> Dwight D. Eisenhower famously observed that, "*plans are useless, but planning is indispensable*." His point was that a plan's details may become obsolete as circumstances change, but the act of planning forces us to explore options and contingencies — a crucial part of effective decision-making.

Here are the financial-planning categories responsible adults cannot avoid:

- A spending, debt, and savings plan.
- Life, health, and disability insurance planning.
- An estate plan — everyone needs one, regardless of wealth or financial complexity.
- An investing game plan — even if that means choosing a target-date fund.

6. Control what you can control and let the rest go.

In our recent podcast with Vietnam POW Mike Penn (Pilot Money Guys Podcast Flight #138), he shared two words that became very important during his unimaginable trials at the Hanoi Hilton and throughout the rest of his life: *"Oh well."* Before he revealed them, I was eagerly anticipating some powerful phrase I had never heard. I was initially disappointed — my expectations were a little higher! But his message was powerful: some things are beyond our control, and we must let them go.

Things happen in the world — and in our lives involving health, finances, the economy, and even work — that drive us crazy. Yet we may have very little ability to affect anything outside our circle of influence. Stephen Covey wrote about this in one of my favorite books, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Here is a simple daily practice inspired by the book. When something is occupying your attention, ask:

1. Can I directly control it?
   - Choose the next action.
2. Can I influence it?
   - Identify a constructive conversation or contribution.
3. Is it beyond my influence?
   - Decide how to prepare, adapt, or redirect your attention.

Own your actions. Work to influence outcomes. Release the demand to control everything. The goal isn't to care less; it's to turn caring into useful action.

Covey emphasizes that proactive people focus on their circle of influence, taking responsibility for their actions and responses. Reactive people spend their energy on the circle of concern, which often produces frustration, stress, and helplessness.

7. Use the KISS principle: Keep It Simple, Stupid.

The KISS principle — "Keep it simple, stupid"— is a design philosophy holding that systems work best when they remain simple rather than becoming unnecessarily complex. First associated with the U.S. Navy in 1960, the principle has since spread to software development, business strategy, product design, and everyday problem-solving.

Financial marketers and professional salespeople know that smart people love complexity. There seems to be no limit to the number of complicated strategies that sound great (see Pilot Money Guys Podcast Flight #133) but may prove to be traps. For example, amazing tax strategies that supposedly promise to virtually eliminate your tax bill — oil and gas, solar, and so on.

Much like the "status alignment" and "aspirational positioning" tactics described earlier, promoters of financial gimmicks know that smart, driven, type-A personalities can become addicted to complexity. Complexity can create an illusion of intelligence. We may dismiss strategies that sound overly simple — live within your means, diversify your portfolio, and so on — yet these are often the most powerful habits for building wealth and prosperity over time.

In the end, becoming a wealthy and financially successful professional pilot looks a lot like becoming a better golfer: ignore the endless gadgets, tune out the noise, and consistently practice the fundamentals. Choose trustworthy information, question anything that appeals to fear or ego, make a real financial plan, focus on what you can control, and keep your strategy simple. None of that is flashy — and it probably won't generate many exciting YouTube thumbnails — but over time, these habits can help you build wealth, protect your peace of mind, and allow you to spend more of your retirement fishing and playing golf instead of worrying about money.



About the Author

Charlie Mattingly a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional, is a first officer for Southwest Airlines based in Atlanta.
Read More...

Charlie Mattingly, CFP® *| CEO & Co-Founder*
Leading Edge Financial Planning
865-240-2292 Office
865-328-4969 Cell/Text
Schedule a time to chat...

Please let us know 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 Charlie@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.



The Pilot Pay Raise Trap: *Don't Let Your Lender Qualify You on Yesterday's Income*

Written by: Jonathan Kulak, Trident Home Loans

You just upgraded to captain. Your hourly rate jumped significantly, but the lender you're talking to says they can't use your new income because you haven't been a captain for two years.

Now what? Before you postpone buying the house, get a second opinion. One of the most misunderstood parts of qualifying airline pilots for a mortgage is how to handle a pay increase. An upgrade to captain, a move to a higher-paying aircraft, or even a normal longevity increase can materially change a pilot's income.

The problem is that not every lender understands how to calculate it.

Airline Income Isn't a Normal Salary

Most airline pilots don't receive a simple annual salary.

We have an hourly rate, a minimum monthly guarantee, actual hours or TFP flown, premium pay, per diem, overrides, and sometimes other forms of compensation. Our hourly rate also changes throughout our careers.

That creates a challenge for lenders accustomed to looking at a paystub, multiplying the current gross pay by 26, and calling it annual income. Pilot income often requires a little more work. Fortunately, complicated doesn't mean impossible.

The Two Parts of Pilot Income

A simple way to think about pilot income is that there are two major pieces:

1. How much you work x how much you're paid.

Your work history helps establish the first part. Your current pay rate establishes the second.

Depending on the loan program and documentation, we can often analyze a pilot's average hours over the previous 12 or 24 months and apply the new hourly rate.

Another approach may be using the pilot's minimum monthly guarantee multiplied by the new hourly rate. This is an important distinction because it means a significant increase in hourly pay doesn't necessarily need to season for another year or two before it can benefit you.

2. The Captain Upgrade

Let's use a simplified example. Assume a first officer has consistently averaged 82 hours per month. The pilot upgrades to captain and the new hourly rate is $300. A lender unfamiliar with airline income might look backward at the pilot's previous earnings and conclude that the higher captain income can't be used yet.

But the historical hours can help establish the pilot's work pattern. If the applicable underwriting requirements and documentation support it, those established hours may be applied to the new captain hourly rate.

In this simplified example: 82 hours x $300 = $24,600 per month.

That's a very different qualifying picture than simply relying on the pilot's historical first officer earnings.

It's Not Just Captain Upgrades

The same issue can arise throughout an airline career. Maybe you stay in the same seat but move to an aircraft with a higher hourly rate. Maybe you hit your next longevity year and receive a contractual pay increase. Maybe a new contract changes your hourly rate.

The important point is that a higher current rate does not automatically mean a lender must ignore it simply because your previous W-2s were based on a lower rate. Your historical earnings still matter. Your work history matters. Your current rate matters. And the documentation supporting the change matters. The key is knowing how those pieces fit together.

Minimum Guarantee Can Matter Too

Average historical hours aren't always the only way to approach the calculation. Airline pilots generally have a contractual minimum guarantee. Depending on the circumstances, qualifying income may be based on that minimum guarantee multiplied by the current hourly rate.

For a pilot whose schedule varies significantly from month to month, this can provide another way to establish stable qualifying income.

Again, the exact calculation depends on the loan program, employment documentation, and individual circumstances. This is why I don't like giving pilots a quick qualification based solely on their most recent paystub. There's usually more to the story.

Not Every Dollar on the Paystub Is the Same

This is another area where pilots can get into trouble. A pilot may look at year-to-date earnings, divide by the number of months worked, and assume that's the income a mortgage lender will use.

It isn't always that simple. Different components of pilot compensation may be treated differently for mortgage qualification. Some income may require a history. Some may need to be averaged. Reimbursements such as per diem shouldn't simply be treated the same as regular wages.

This is why two lenders can look at exactly the same pilot and arrive at very different qualifying incomes. Sometimes the difference isn't the loan program, it's how well the lender understands the pilot's compensation.

Don't Make Career Decisions Around a Bad Preapproval

This is the part I really want pilots to understand. I've known of pilots who assumed they needed to wait months after an upgrade before buying because that's what they were told. That can affect some pretty significant decisions. Maybe you delay buying after moving to a new base. Maybe you renew a lease you didn't want. Maybe you don't make an offer on a house because you were told your income wasn't high enough. Before making those decisions, make sure the income calculation is actually correct. A preapproval is only as good as the assumptions behind it.

Get the Income Right Before You Shop

For pilots, I believe income analysis should happen early in the preapproval process. If you've recently upgraded, changed aircraft, received a longevity increase, or had another meaningful change in compensation, tell your lender upfront. Provide the documentation needed to establish both your historical work pattern and your new pay rate. It's much better to work through that calculation before you fall in love with a house than when you're already under contract.

And if you're told, "We can't use that income because you haven't been making it for two years," don't automatically assume that's the end of the conversation. Ask why. Sometimes the answer is legitimate. Other times, you simply need someone who understands airline-pilot income.

Final Approach

Airline compensation is different, but different doesn't have to mean difficult. An upgrade to captain, a move to a higher-paying aircraft, or a longevity increase can significantly change your financial picture. In the right circumstances, you may not have to wait for years of tax returns or W-2s at the new rate before that increase can be considered.

The key is understanding the difference between your historical work pattern and your current rate of pay — and documenting both correctly. You've worked hard to earn the upgrade. Make sure your mortgage qualification isn't still flying around on yesterday's pay rate.

Have questions or want a second look at a quote?

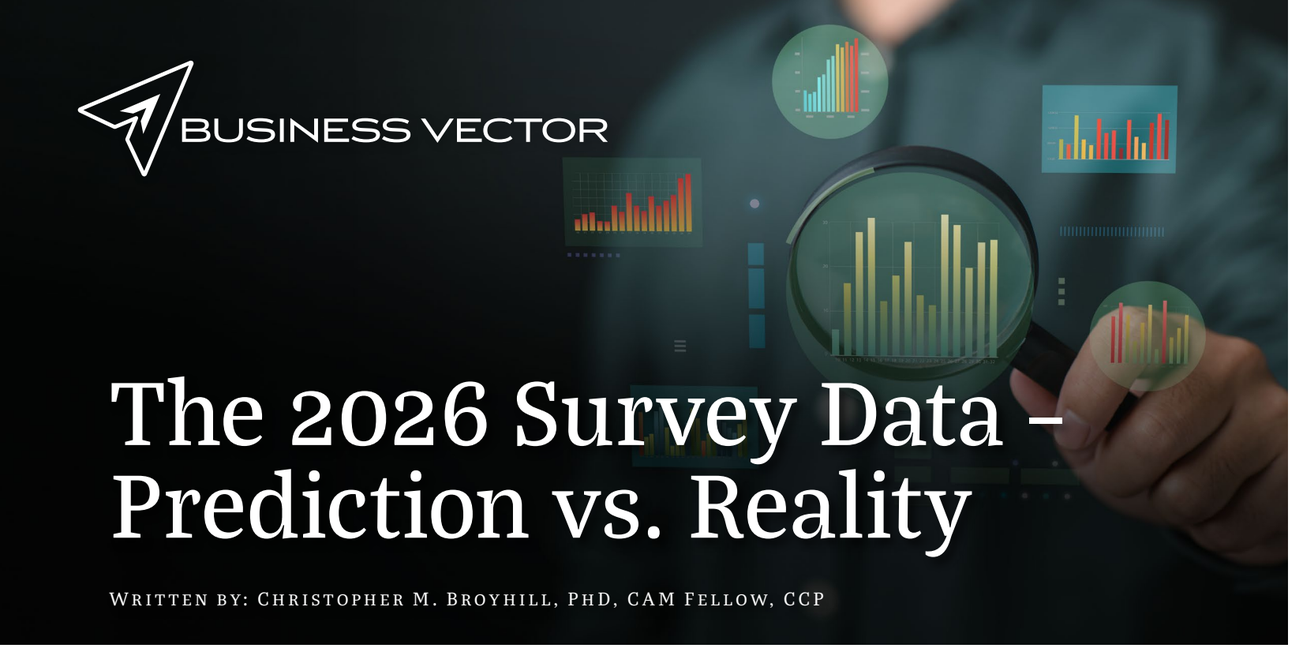
Email me at jk@mythl.com or call/text 850-377-1114, or visit tridenthomeloans.com/jonathan-kulak – I'm always happy to help a fellow pilot think through it.

This article is part of my ongoing mortgage series for Aero Crew 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...



The 2026 Survey Data – Prediction vs. Reality

Written by: Christopher M. Broyhill, PhD, CAM Fellow, CCP

The 2026 data have finally landed and it's time to see how well I predicted. First, let's have a review of survey respondent demographics because that had a significant impact on this year's results.

Survey	Number of Organizations	Number of Personnel	Average Personnel per Organization
NBAA	455	3,442	7.6
Gallagher	131	8,572	65.4

Table 1: 2023 Survey Respondent Demographics

Survey	Number of Organizations	Number of Personnel	Average Personnel per Organization
NBAA	459	4,578	9.9
Gallagher	117	8,329	71.2

Table 2: 2024 Survey Respondent Demographics

Survey	Number of Organizations	Number of Personnel	Average Personnel per Organization
NBAA	415	4,421	10.7
Gallagher	117	4,708	41.7

Table 3: 2025 Survey Respondent Demographics

Survey	Number of Organizations	Number of Personnel	Average Personnel per Organization
NBAA	352	4,090	11.6
Gallagher	107	4,851	45.3

Table 4: 2026 Survey Respondent Demographics

BACK TO CONTENTS

You can see that the level of participation by organizations fell for both surveys in 2026, about 15% for NBAA organizations surveyed and 9% for Gallagher organizations surveyed. While the incumbent count was slightly fewer for NBAA and slightly more for Gallagher, those numbers are less relevant to the data. Compensation policy is set by organizations and when you have a change in the number of organizations, you can have significant changes in the database.

And that's what happened this year. When I reviewed the data for 2026, I had to make some decisions about how to deal with it since the dataset had changed so significantly. Compensation growth for several positions in one of the surveys appeared to be negative, year over year. But when that happens, it's not a real number. No one is cutting pay in our industry. But when certain organizations remove their compensation information from the dataset, in some cases, compensation levels can appear to be contracting.

I had to develop a methodology to represent "real" compensation growth from 2025-2026 and deal with the statistical anomalies. Once I implemented that methodology, the growth stats in Table 5 below were generated. Green indicates the actual data was better than the prediction, red indicates the actual was worse than predicted, and orange indicates the prediction was within 5% on the low side.

Position	Predicted Growth 2025-2026	"Real" Growth 2025-2026
Avionics Technician	5.46%	11.81%
Captain	6.57%	8.48%
Chief Pilot	6.66%	9.05%
Director of Maintenance	6.07%	5.20%
Director/Aviation Manager (Flying)	6.91%	3.40%
Director/Aviation Manager (Non-Flying)	7.93%	19.47%
First Officer	8.06%	7.77%
Flight Attendant	8.50%	10.64%
Flight Coordinator/Office Mgr.	6.59%	5.07%
Flight Technician	5.44%	7.28%
Line Service Technician	7.38%	9.16%
Maintenance Assistant	8.78%	10.09%
Maintenance Supervisor	5.67%	3.40%
Maintenance Technician	5.29%	6.96%
Scheduler	3.78%	4.35%
Senior Captain	5.78%	6.07%
Senior Flight Attendant	7.03%	11.33%
Overall Average	6.67%	8.20%

Table 5: Real Compensation Growth vs Predicted 2025 – 2026

Now using those growth percentages, if we look at predicted total cash vs. actual total cash, year over year, the results appear in Table 6, using the same color scheme as that in Table 5.

Position	2025 Predicted Average Total Cash Compensation	2026 Actual Average Total Cash Compensation
Avionics Technician	$104,188	$110,465
Captain	$233,734	$237,921
Chief Pilot	$297,723	$304,404
Director of Maintenance	$227,069	$225,214
Director/Aviation Manager (Flying)	$372,116	$359,909
Director/Aviation Manager (Non-Flying)	$330,471	$365,795
First Officer	$157,252	$156,726
Flight Attendant	$146,073	$148,956
Flight Coordinator/Office Mgr.	$138,245	$136,280
Flight Technician	$146,489	$149,044
Line Service Technician	$65,307	$66,387
Maintenance Assistant	$95,217	$96,359
Maintenance Supervisor	$176,524	$172,738
Maintenance Technician	$131,331	$133,412
Scheduler	$93,989	$94,508
Senior Captain	$277,253	$278,008
Senior Flight Attendant	$170,778	$177,640
Average	$188,507	$191,222

Table 6: Actual Compensation vs. Predicted for 2026

You can see that while some of the actual growth percentages were outside the 5% window, when we turn those percentages into cash, the low estimates are all within 5% of the actual cash level.

One last note for the 2026 data. The rumors and anecdotal stories of exorbitant compensation levels for G-700 and G-800 drivers turned out to be true. While those compensation levels raised the average for all premium long-range jet drivers, G-700 and G-800 drivers enjoy a 20% premium above that new, higher average. I couldn't believe it when I first extracted it but then after multiple runs with weighted averages, it turned out to be true. Let the games begin.

If you want to learn more, check out our new website at https://aircompcalculator.com. We completely renovated it so that you can find what you need more easily and quickly.



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...

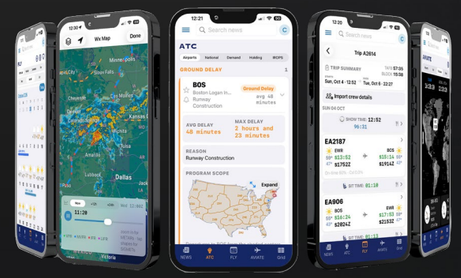


BACK TO CONTENTS

FEATURE

The Aero Crew News App – *A Tab-by-Tab Tour*

Your schedule, flights, layovers, commute, pay, and the news, all in one place.



WRITTEN BY: CREWDESK

Most crewmembers start a trip with about half a dozen opened apps. One holds the schedule, one the weather, another handles the commute, and a webpage for the FAA status that requires an engineer to decode.

The Aero Crew News app brings all of these into one location. The idea is simple — your schedule is the starting point. Import it via a calendar subscription or screenshot, and each trip is connected to its flight information, ATC delays, airport conditions, layover details, commuting options, and an estimated pay picture.

Around that core sits the news, weather, study tools, and *The Grid*, ACN's reference for airlines' contracts and pay scales, which now also includes seniority.

Follow along as this guide walks you through the app layout and its five tabs: ***News, ATC, FLY, AVIATE,*** and ***Grid***.

New in 2.1.0 — Start for free

The app originally began with a paid plan, but in version 2.1.0, there's a free membership option available. Simply download the app and you're in with no commitment necessary. The free account gives you access to the ***News*** tab with all Aero Crew News' articles, columns, and breaking news. In addition, you can access most of what's in the ***ATC*** tab, the weather tools in ***AVIATE***, and *The* ***Grid***'s pay and contract basics. That's enough to read the news, check what the National Airspace System (NAS) is doing, and consult the weather before you leave the hotel. You can also look up any airline's pay scale. All this is available without a subscription.

Once you get an idea of how robust this thing can be, you're ready for the rest. The paid plans are customized to your schedule, with flight tracking, layovers, the commuter finder, plus pay tools, study decks, and push notifications. Upgrades are handled through the App Store, and soon, through the Google Play Store. (Plans and prices are under ***Getting started*** at the end of this guide.)

Start with your schedule

Personalization in the app hangs off your schedule, so importing it is the first step. Go to ***FLY*** → ***Schedule***, then tap **+**, and choose ***Add or import a trip***.

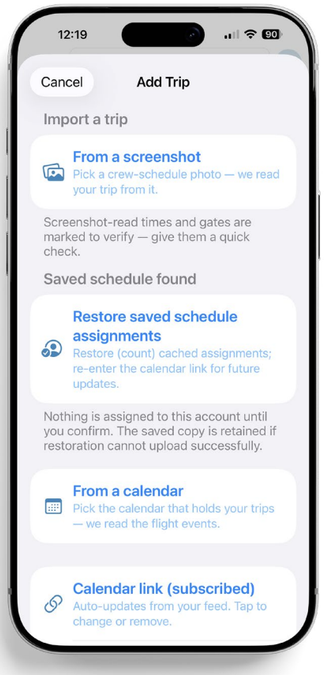
There are several ways in, depending on where your schedule lives:

- **A calendar subscription:** Choose ***Subscribe to a calendar link*** and paste the actual calendar-feed link, not your airline's website address. If the feed is protected, the app asks for your crew credentials. Some airlines provide a CAL subscription with a separate password; make sure your password is different from your main login.
- **A calendar already on your phone:** Pick it and the app reads the trips.
- **A schedule file:** Import a compatible export.
- **A screenshot:** The app extracts the flights, and you review them before saving.
- **FLICA:** A guided export walks you through this.

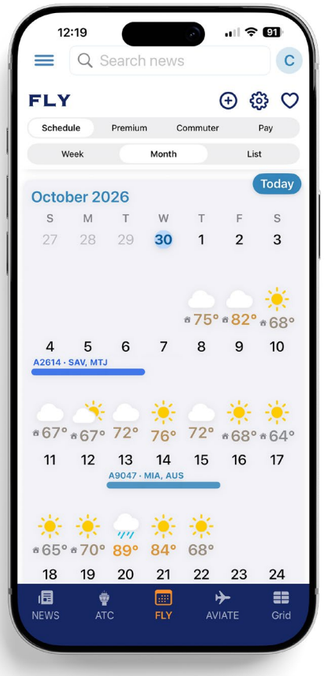
One distinction matters. A subscription can refresh from its source as your schedule changes. A file or screenshot is a snapshot; it won't update without intervention on your part.

Once imported, trips appear in ***Week***, ***Month***, or ***List*** view. If a trip doesn't import correctly, tap ***Report a schedule issue*** on the import screen to let us know. You can also edit, remove, or restore individual activities. Your reserve and non-flying days are clearly marked.

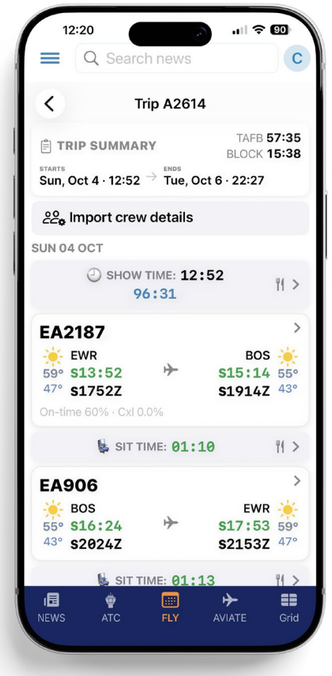
There's a family option too. For those who ask, "When are you home?" you can share a read-only calendar. From the same **+** menu, select ***Share calendar with family***. You control each viewer's access, and which details they see. You can allow someone to tap on the event and there will appear a link to check your flight status. Calendar events also update to show the flight status.



*The **Add Trip** menu. Import from a screenshot, a calendar, or a subscribed calendar link.*



Month view, with each trip's layover cities plus the forecast for every day.



An open trip: trip summary, show time, and each leg with weather at both ends.

Your trip, leg by leg

Open a trip and the schedule becomes the organizing point for the rest of the day. Expand a day, then an individual flight, and you'll find what's available for it: show or report time, the legs, gates, company-filed route, weather, and all ATC information for the airports involved. ATC information includes ground delay programs, ground stops, EDCTs, en route restrictions, and even departure fix restrictions.

One very useful section is **Inbound aircraft**. This shows the flight bringing your airplane in, which is usually the first place a late departure starts. Scheduled times sit alongside live updates where they exist.

A word of caution the app itself would give you: *scheduled* is not *actual*. And if live information isn't showing, that doesn't mean the flight is on time.

Aircraft Trace goes a step further. From ***Inbound aircraft***, tap ***Trace aircraft*** to explore that airplane's rotation and available flight history beyond the immediate inbound leg. It's a way to see where disruption may be building earlier in the day. (***Aircraft Trace*** is part of the Max plan.)

If you wear an Apple Watch, the companion app puts the essentials on your wrist. Open Aero Crew News on your iPhone to sync a trip, and the Watch shows flight, report or show time, van, and ATC information where available.

BACK TO CONTENTS

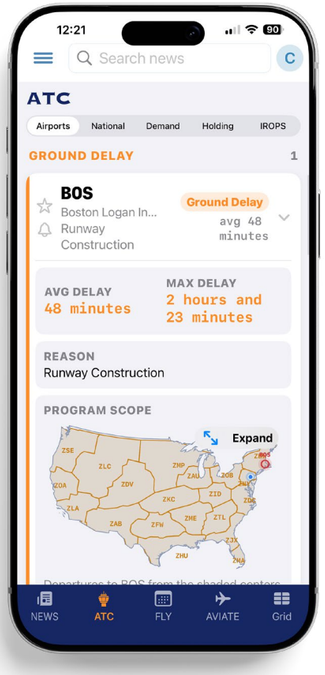
What the system is doing: ATC

The ***ATC*** tab answers the question every crew asks before leaving the hotel: what is the system doing today? It has five views.

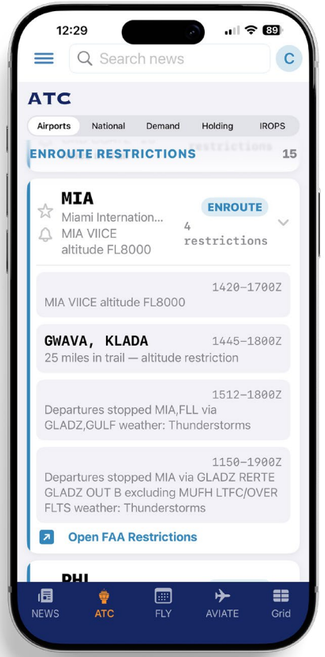
- **Airports.** Open an airport card and expand any reported program to see the reason, timing, and available scope.
- **National.** The broader traffic-program picture across the country.
- **Demand.** Available airport demand information.
- **Holding.** Where aircraft are holding.
- **IROPS.** Disruption information.

Start with the ***AI Briefing*** card at the top of ***Airports***. It gives a one-line national headline and a few bullets on what the system is doing right now. The briefing is built from FAA NAS status, the FAA restrictions page, and airspace flow programs. It refreshes every 30 minutes. Anything unusual leads: closures, ground stops, heavier-than-normal delays. Routine metering gets folded into a single line, and on a quiet day, the card simply states so.

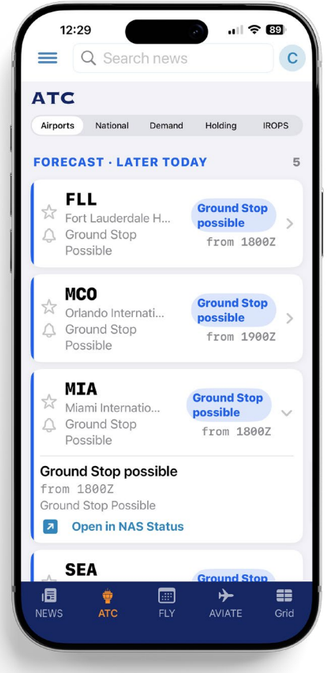
En route restrictions are where the app does the most translating. The FAA publishes them as one long table, often more than 150 rows, sorted by the facility that requested each restriction and written in shorthand like “LANNA 5MINIT 1800-1930 N90:HPN.” The app sorts them by airport instead, with your starred airports first. Each restriction shows the fix in bold, the active window in Zulu, and the reason in plain English: “5 minutes in trail,” “departures stopped,” “departure approval required.” You can view them by category or fold them into each airport’s card, and the original FAA page is one tap away.



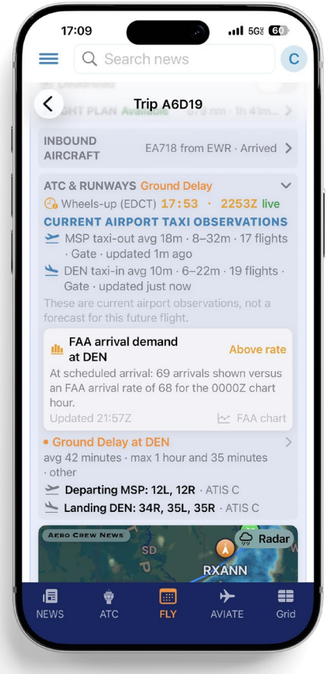
A ground delay program at BOS, with its reason, average and maximum delay, and the centers it covers.



En route restrictions for Miami: miles-in-trail, altitude restrictions, and departure stops for thunderstorms, each with its active window in Zulu.



A look ahead at the day. Ground stops possible later at FLL, MCO and MIA, with expected start times.



The same information inside your trip. A ground delay at the destination, the EDCT, and arrival demand against the FAA rate.

Every airport card has two controls. The star icon makes it a favorite, pinning it to the top of the list. The bell icon turns on push alerts for that airport, and they arrive even when the app is closed. You’ll get a notification when the airport picks up a new ground stop, ground delay program, closure, airspace flow program, or departure or arrival delays. Each alert gives the reason, average delay, and end time. You won’t be alerted twice. You can turn the whole category on or off under ***Settings → ATC & airport alerts.***

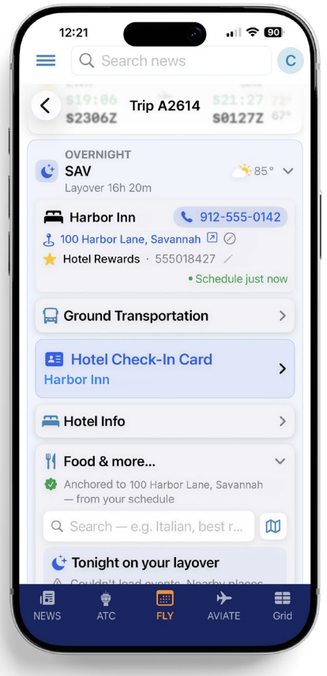
Most of the ***ATC*** tab is included in the free app but push alerts (every notification available in the app) require a paid plan.

While this contributes to your situational awareness, it is not a crystal ball. Coverage and freshness vary, and the app can’t track every aircraft nor predict delays with certainty. It does put the programs affecting your day in one place, including the reasons.

BACK TO CONTENTS

Making the layover usable

On most schedules, an overnight is just an airport code between two duty days. In the app, it's a section you can open. Expand an overnight in your trip and you'll see available hotel details, transportation information, and van pickup times. Below these are nearby places for food, coffee, and things to do, each includes directions.



An overnight expanded, with the hotel, ground transportation, the check-in card, and nearby places.

You can tune this to how you actually spend a layover. Layover preferences let you set your interests and search radius so a 14-hour overnight in a new city looks different from a 9-hour one near the field. Save the good spots to favorites and they'll be there next time the trip comes around. Of course, this information is dependent upon the underlying records.

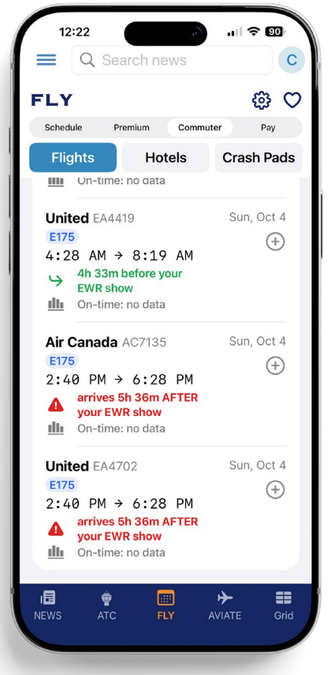
Hotel details can't all be verified, and a listed business isn't guaranteed to be open when you get there, but you'll have the information to call ahead to ensure you're not wasting your time and effort.

The commute

For commuters, the trip starts well before report time. ***FLY → Commuter*** handles that part.

Under ***Flights***, choose ***Going to work***, ***Going home***, or ***For fun***. Set the departure airport, destination, and date, pick the maximum number of segments you're willing to ride, and tap ***Search flights***. Results include both passenger and cargo flights, since many cargo carriers take jumpseaters (though rules vary by carrier). Expand an itinerary to see the details, save the options you like, and follow airline or Google Flights links for booking information.

The finder also knows your contract. Each result is color-coded by how much cushion it leaves before show time: green is comfortable, yellow is tight, and red is too late. The red line defaults to your airline's commuter clause, so a red flag means that option wouldn't meet your contract's arrive-before-report requirement. Tap the gear icon to read the clause itself, quoted word for word from your contract (or to set your own thresholds). Commuter clauses are being added as contracts are loaded, and not every airline is included at this publication date.



Commuter results are measured against your show time. Options that arrive too late are flagged in red.

Let's be clear about what this is not. The finder doesn't show seat loads or jumpseat availability, and it can't tell you whether you'll get on. It helps you map your options; listing and the jumpseat are still on you.

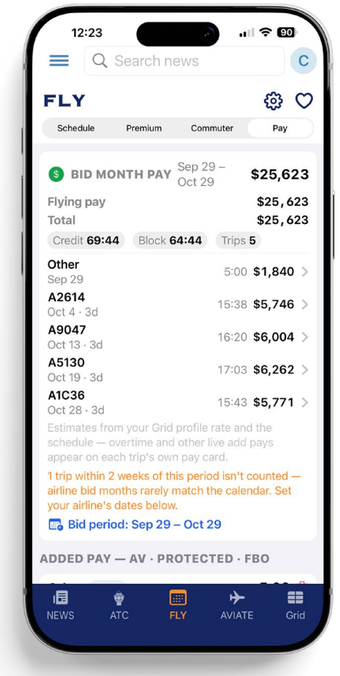
Once you save a commuter flight, the app treats it like a leg of your trip. It shows up in your schedule next to your work flights and is tracked the same way, with live status, delays, gates, and the inbound aircraft. The app keeps checking it against your show time, so if the commute starts slipping, you'll see it before you're sitting at the gate.

Next door are ***Hotels*** and ***Crash Pads***. Pick your base or destination, open a listing for details and contact or booking links, and save the ones worth keeping. You'll see listings but these do not confirm a room, a crew rate, or a reservation.

What the month might pay

Once your schedule is in, ***FLY → Pay*** turns it into an estimated pay picture. You get trip estimates, credit and block summaries, per diem, and supported additional pay items, totaled for the bid period.

To get a useful number, fill in your airline and pay details in ***Profile*** first. Then ensure the bid-period dates are right, open a trip's pay breakdown, and look at the rate and assumptions the algorithm has used. The estimate is built from the flying on your schedule; non-flying activities such as vacation, training, or sick time are worth checking by hand.



Bid-month pay with credit, block, and an estimate for each trip. Figures shown are illustrative.

BACK TO CONTENTS

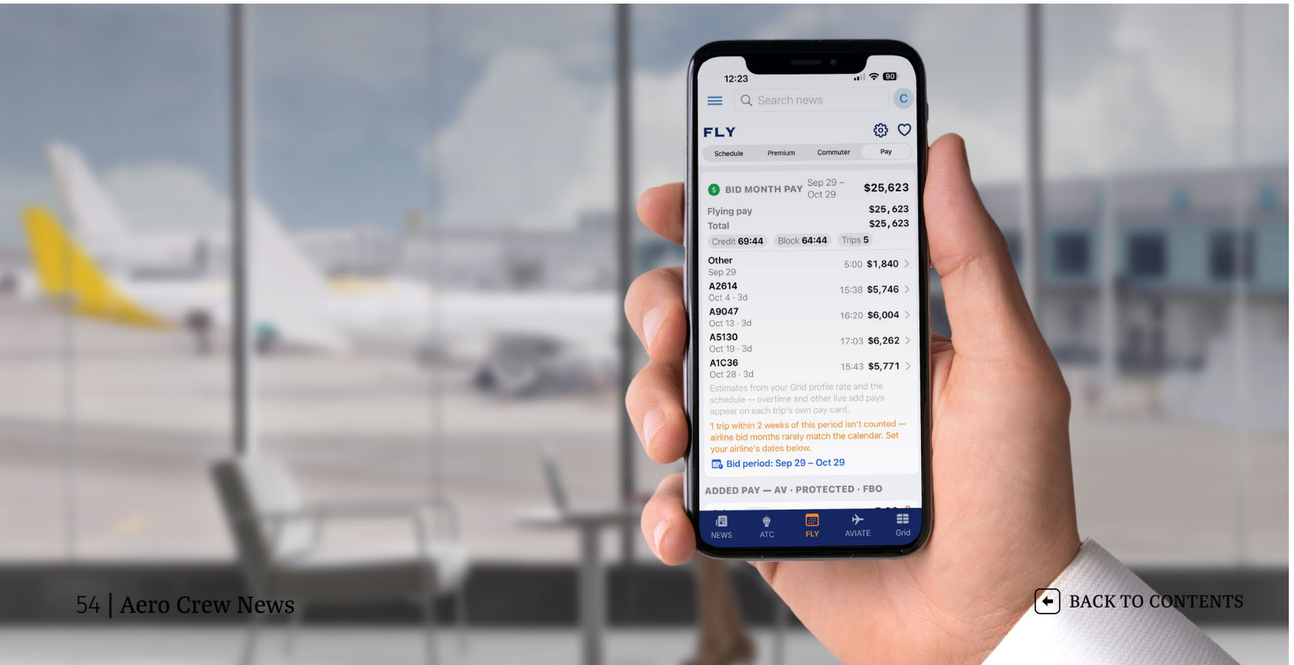
Premium, also under ***FLY***, is a conditions-based outlook for your airline and base. It looks at operational disruption and schedule pressures that may be associated with premium-flying opportunities, and a tap on a base shows what's contributing. It's an outlook, not a list of confirmed premium trips, and it isn't connected to your airline's staffing system. ***Premium*** is part of the Max plan.

The longer view lives in **Grid → Pay**, which is separate from the trip summary under ***FLY***.

- ***Retirement*** walks through a wizard for career and contribution scenarios, with tax tools built into the workflow.
- ***Live meter*** shows an estimated running pay amount once you set your inputs.
- ***Compare*** lays out supported compensation scenarios across multiple airlines.

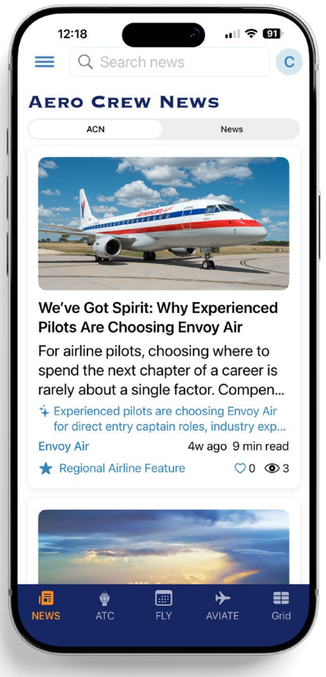
Together, these tools are a way to plan your future, and they're most useful for those just starting out. Choosing which airline to go with is always a challenge. Here you can line up pay, retirement contributions, and career progression side by side to see where each path could take you, all before you make that commitment.

The calculator suite is generally part of the Pro plan, and multi-airline comparison is part of Max. Every number here is an illustrative estimate. None of it is a payroll record, financial advice, or a guaranteed outcome. Always check flight and pay information against your airline's official records.

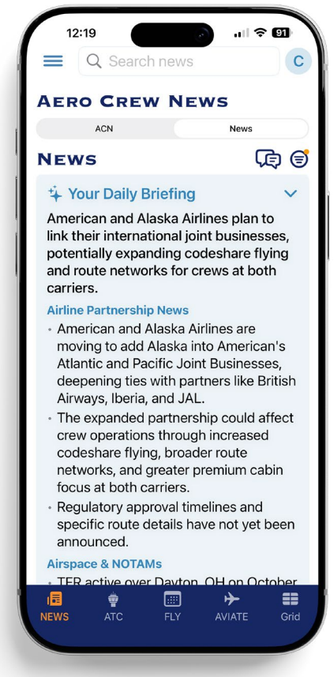


The news, and a way to ask it questions

The ***News*** tab is where Aero Crew News lives in the app. Inside, it holds ACN articles and columns. ***News*** carries ACN's news bulletins and the Daily Briefing, so the day's aviation news is in the same app as your trip.



The Aero Crew News feed.



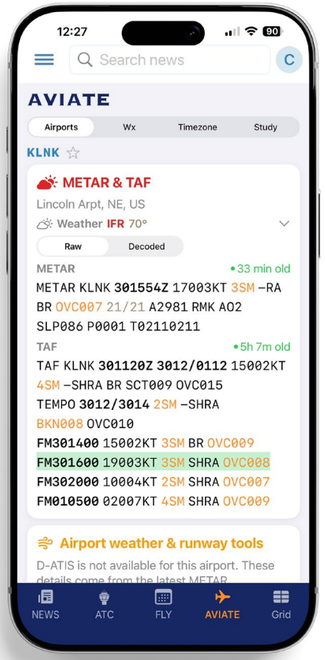
The Daily Briefing *at the top of* ***News****. The* ***Ask the News*** *button sits beside the filter icon.*

Search across coverage, open the filter icon in ***News*** to set your interests, and save articles to read later, perhaps from the jumpseat.

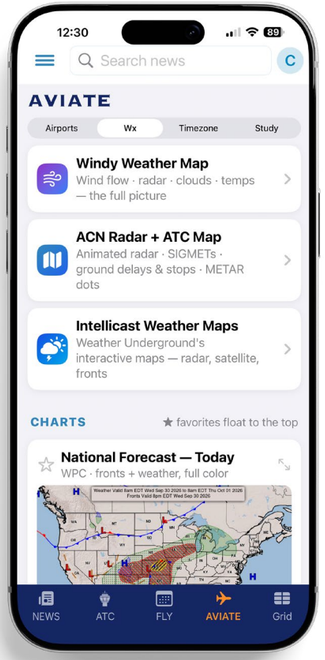
Two tools sit atop the feed. The ***Daily Briefing*** (Plus plan) appears in ***News*** as a condensed overview of the day's aviation coverage. Behind the speech-bubble icon is ***Ask the News*** which gives AI-assisted answers to specific aviation-news questions, with the supporting articles or sources listed so you can check them.

Ask the News is a research tool. It isn't a source of operational instructions. The number of new questions you can pose and your access to saved answers is dependent upon your plan.

BACK TO CONTENTS



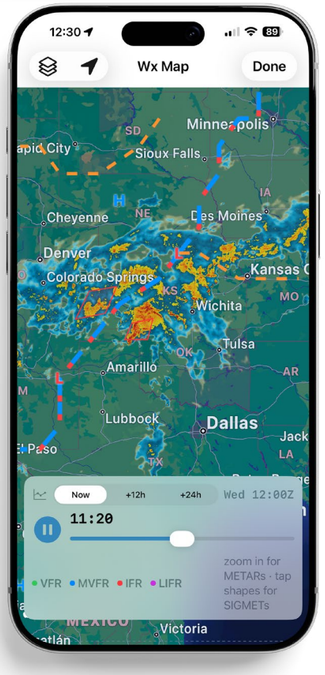
METAR and TAF for any field, in raw or decoded form.



Wx menu and charts

AVIATE: weather, time, and study

Airports is the quick weather check. Search an airport, tap ***Get Wx***, and expand the sections for available METARs, TAFs, D-ATIS, NOTAM information, runway and weather tools. The raw reports are color-coded, so you don't have to decode every group to see what matters. The flight category (VFR, MVFR, IFR, or LIFR) shows in color at the top, and low ceilings and visibilities are highlighted in the METAR and TAF. The TAF line currently in effect is shaded, and each report shows how old it is. Switch to ***Decoded*** for plain English. Save the airports you check most. For the bigger picture, ***Wx*** groups weather maps and chart resources.



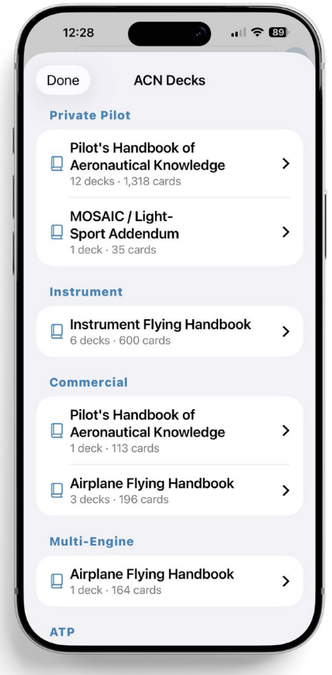
Radar map with flight categories and SIGMETs

These are situational-awareness tools. They don't replace official weather briefings, approved navigation products, or your company's procedures.

Timezone puts Zulu and local time side by side with a world map, city clocks, and airport-time lookup. The gear icon lets you change the clock style and choose which cities appear. It's a small feature crews tend to use every trip.



Zulu and local time, with clocks for the cities on your schedule.



ACN starter decks, organized by certificate.

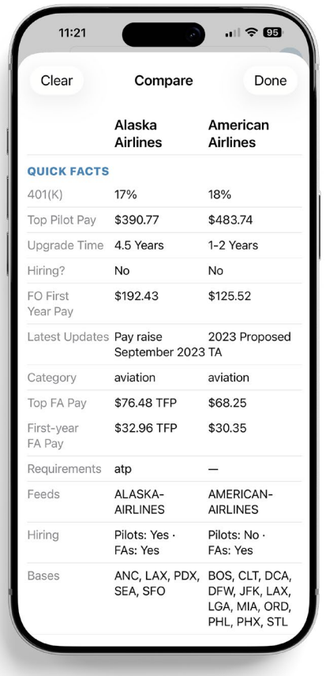


Study is for recurrent, upgrades, and anything else you need to know cold. Start from an ACN starter deck or build your own: paste in material, or import CSV/TSV, Excel, or Anki .apkg files. Tap to reveal each answer, mark it *Correct* or *Missed*, and go back through the misses. The app keeps a study history for every card.

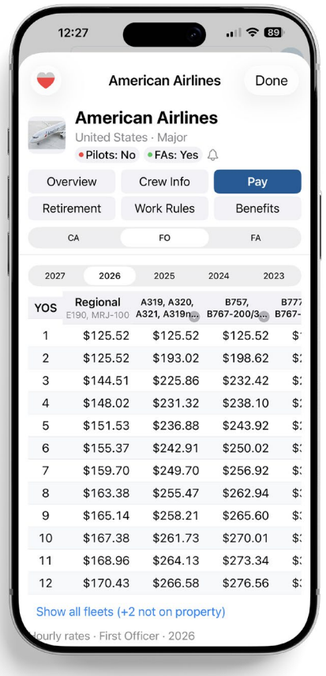
The Grid: airlines, contracts, and seniority

ACN readers know the ***Grid*** as our reference on airline pay and contracts. In the app, ***Grid*** becomes a tab of its own, built around your career.

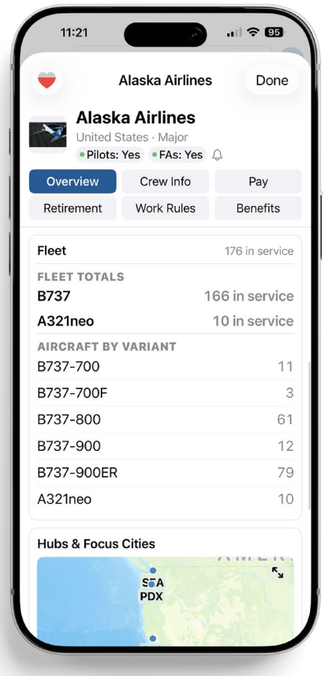
- ***My Airline*** starts with your carrier, personalized to your profile.
- ***Grid*** lets you browse other airlines. Pick one and expand its pay scales, contract and work-rule information, and hiring details, or line up supported carriers side by side.
- ***Seniority*** offers supported tools for your personal standing and progression.



Two airlines compared side by side.



First-officer pay scales by year of service and fleet, for any contract year.



Airline overview and fleet

When you're reading a number, check what it applies to: the seat, the aircraft or pay category, the contract year, and the source date. Coverage varies by airline and workgroup. Seniority projections are estimates, not a promise of an upgrade or a base move. After all, no one can predict when that senior widebody first officer will decide to upgrade to captain on a narrowbody.

Getting started

Five minutes of setup makes everything mentioned above work for you.

1. Tap the account button in the upper right, then ***Profile***.
2. Set your airline, crew role, base, aircraft or pay category, and employment details.
3. Set your home airport so commuting and travel information fits your life.
4. Open the upper-left menu, then ***Settings***, to choose notification categories and review your subscription.
5. Import your schedule under ***FLY → Schedule***.

Pilots, flight attendants, and travelers see controls suited to their profile, so your screens will likely differ from a colleague's. Received alerts are under the account button → ***Notifications***. The upper-left menu also holds the ***Store*** and ***Got a story?***, which sends a tip straight to the ACN newsroom. We read every one.

Plenty of the app's features are free. A free membership includes the ***News*** tab, most of the ***ATC*** tab, ***AVIATE***'s weather tools, and *The* ***Grid***'s pay and contract basics, with no subscription. All other features, including all push notifications, are available within the three paid plans, each with a 7-day free trial, and you can cancel anytime in your App Store settings.

Plan	Monthly	Annually	What is included
Free	$0	$0	The ***News*** tab, most of the ***ATC*** tab, ***AVIATE*** weather tools, and The ***Grid*** pay and contract basics. No push notifications.
Plus	$5.99	$59.99	Live ATC status, trip management with unlimited history, calendar sync, push alerts, and a monthly AI allowance
Pro	$9.99	$99.99	Everything in Plus, adding multi-leg day tools, live flight intelligence (inbound aircraft, gates, route map, and the commuter finder), and a greater AI allowance
Max	$19.99	$199.99	Everything in Pro, plus the highest AI limits, and best model, with priority data refresh.

Prices are for aerocrewnews.com/the-app as of November 2026.

We built this app for the people who read this magazine: crews who want the big picture of the schedule for that day, from the news to the van time to the paycheck, in one place. Download it at aerocrewnews.com/the-app, import a trip, and tell us what you'd change. The app is currently available for iPhone. (Android coming soon, currently testing.)

BACK TO CONTENTS

Where to find what

Aero Crew News App Feature and Plan Guide

iPhone crew account guide

Each chart shows the features first included in that plan and where to find them. Paid plans also include the features on the preceding pages. Availability depends on crew role, published airline data, airport coverage, and enabled services.



Free

Signed-in Free members can use these screens. (Paid features remain visible in their usual tabs with an upgrade suggestion.)

Feature	Where to find it
ACN articles and columns	NEWS → ACN
ACN news and partner story previews	NEWS → News
Article search and ACN column filters	Top search; NEWS → Columns filter
Saved articles	NEWS → Saved Articles
Article likes and comments	NEWS → open an eligible article
Public airport delays and restrictions	ATC → Airports
National FAA traffic map and runway visibility	ATC → National
Public airport demand	ATC → Demand
Airport weather, METAR, TAF, D-ATIS and NOTAMs	AVIATE → Airports
Radar and weather charts	AVIATE → Wx
World time zones and home or selected clocks	AVIATE → Timezone
Airline directory, search and filters	Grid → Grid
Published airline profile basics*	Grid → Grid → select an airline; Overview, Crew Info, Pay, Retirement, Work Rules and Benefits where published
Aero Crew Shop	Top-left menu → Store, when the Store switch is on
Socials, settings, about and story tips	Top-left menu → ACN Socials, Settings, About or Got a story?
Profile and plan management	Profile icon; Settings → Plans and restore purchases

* Published airline pay or retirement figures can be incomplete or inaccurate. Verify current airline and contract records, and seek qualified pay or financial advice before making decisions.

Plus ($5.99/month or $59.99 annually)

Plus includes everything in Free. These are the additional Plus membership features.

Feature	Where to find it
Daily Briefing	NEWS → Your Daily Briefing
Previously saved answers from Ask the News	NEWS → Ask the News
Breaking news alerts and story follows	NEWS → article and notification controls
ATC AI Briefing	ATC → Airports → ATC AI Briefing
Favorite airports and airport watchlist	ATC → Airports → star or Starred Airports
FAA airport program alerts	ATC → Airports → airport card → bell
Per-flight EDCT list	ATC → National → EDCTs
Current airport taxi times	ATC → National → Taxi Times
Live holding map and holding aircraft	ATC → Holding
IROPS disruption detail	ATC → IROPS
Study decks, flashcards and imports	AVIATE → Study; CSV, Excel and Anki import inside Study
My Airline personalized view	Grid → My Airline
Favorite airlines and hiring alerts	Grid → Grid → airline card favorite; airline detail → hiring bell

Pro ($9.99/month or $99.99 annually)

Pro includes everything within Free and Plus. Crew schedule, personal pay and career tools begin here.

Feature	Where to find it
Ask the News new questions	NEWS → Ask the News; 30 new questions per month
Crew schedule and trip import	FLY → Schedule → Week, Month or List; + to add or import
Trip and flight-leg details	FLY → Schedule → open a trip or leg; live times, status, gates and flight plan when available
Trip alerts and calendar integration	FLY → Schedule → Gear icon
Family calendar sharing	FLY → Schedule → + → Share calendar with family
Layover hotels, vans and nearby places	FLY → Schedule → expand an overnight or layover
Commuter and travel flight finder	FLY → Commuter or Travel
Saved flights, crew hotels and crash pads	FLY → Commuter or Travel
Inbound aircraft, gates and route maps	FLY → Schedule → open a leg → Inbound Aircraft or map
Trip pay, credit, per diem and protections*	FLY → Pay; expand a trip -or- FLY → Schedule → open a leg → scroll to the bottom of the trip
Bid-period pay totals and PTC or LPV comparison*	FLY → Pay → estimated total and trip rows, where applicable
Seniority tracker and projections*	Grid → Seniority; where available
Personal pay tools and Live Pay Meter*	Grid → Pay
Retirement projection and current-state tax estimate*	Grid → Pay → Retirement or Taxes
Your contract in plain language*	Grid → My Airline → contract card; FLY → trip → Contract help, where available

* Seniority tracking and plain-language contract help are available only where supporting data exists. Pay and tax figures are estimates and may be inaccurate or out of date. Verify current contracts and records, and seek qualified pay, financial or tax advice before making decisions.

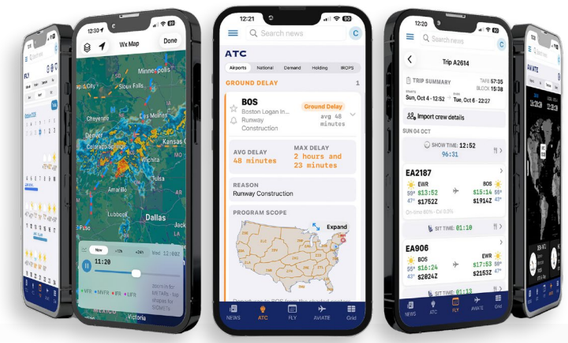
Max ($19.99/month or $199.99 annually)

Max includes everything within Free, Plus and Pro and these additional Max features.

Feature	Where to find it
Ask the News expanded question allowance	NEWS → Ask the News; 100 new questions per month
Premium Pay Conditions Outlook*	FLY → Premium; crew-base outlook for the next 6, 6–24 or 24–72 hours
Aircraft Trace and earlier rotation	FLY → Schedule → leg → Inbound Aircraft → Trace aircraft
Changed-trip contract analysis*	FLY → Schedule → modified trip → Contract help
Multi-airline comparison*	Grid → Grid → select Compare on airline cards → Compare
Career and retirement outcome comparison*	Grid → Grid → Compare; or Grid → Pay → Retirement → Compare
Future contract rates where published*	Grid → Grid → Compare → Future contract rates
State-to-state tax comparison*	Grid → Pay → Taxes → compare states
Multi-airline what-if modeling*	Grid → Grid → Compare → assumptions and scenarios

*Premium flying outlooks do not promise an offer or a pay amount. Contract, retirement, pay, and tax comparisons may be incomplete or inaccurate. Verify current agreements and records, and consult qualified pay, financial or tax professionals before making decisions.

Available Now on
THE APP STORE



AERO CREW NEWS™

The last aviation app you need

Built by crew, for crew & anyone who flies



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