

OPEIU Local 107 General Membership

NOTAM

NOVEMBER 2013

Congratulations!

Shawn Vaughn has been named as Director of Training, and Bob Lynch has been named as Head of Flight Standards.

The Members of Local 107 applaud your efforts and welcome you to your new positions.

BALLOTS ARE OUT!!!

Election ballots have been mailed out to all members and should be completed and returned promptly in the prepaid envelopes provided. As the intention of your current Board is to maximize member participation in the election, all are encouraged to VOTE at your earliest convenience.

Ballots must be received by Nov 29 and will be collected and counted on Nov 30 at 1800 at the Galliano base. Any member in good standing is welcome to witness the count.

It should be clear by now that the Board we elect will lead us into Negotiations once again and guide the course of the Local for years to come. Members are encouraged to support those who will represent both your perspectives & your temperament in dealings with the Company. Make no mistake... Your vote matters!

“...Studies have demonstrated that aeronautical skills that are not practiced regularly quickly fade, regardless of experience level or certificates and ratings held.”

How Current Is Your Knowledge?

The quote above reinforces something we all should have learned well by now: that much of our knowledge and skill is extremely perishable. While this is bound to happen to varying degrees in situations like ours which involve a great deal of information, the important point is to keep ourselves from the delusion that my friend Homer Simpson finds himself in here.

Clearly, this is a unique and individualized thing. For example, a young pilot may come in with very little IFR experience or less than ideal formative training. Following several years of VFR only flying, a solid recollection of all the associated regulations and procedures of IFR proves challenging, not to mention the flying skills



themselves. On the other hand, pilots with greater experience or more extensive backgrounds can just as easily lose their proficiency, and may be even more susceptible to allowing their knowledge to become stale.

Having confessed my own past complacency, I have utilized this platform repeatedly to encourage members to avoid similar missteps by maintaining a diligent awareness of your individual preparedness. Honest self-assessment is the key. Also, consult the [FAA handbooks](#), review the [AIM](#) online and carry your questions to your check airmen when you visit training. It might just save your bacon!



Disclaimer: This joke is in no way intended to encourage the consumption of pork products.

HAI Fall 2013 President's Message

Matt Zuccaro shares his latest thoughts on the state of our industry, [Next Generation: It's About People, Not Avionics](#). Check it out!!

Tapering Off

DAMNIT!! I was done. I had finished my hitch and I had written the NOTAM - subpar as it might have been - but I was gone. I was on a plane bound for *Home Sweet Home*, and that's when it happened. I opened Southwest's *Spirit Magazine* and saw the headline [55% of us are looking to change careers](#). With no intention whatsoever, it all started to connect. Matt Zuccaro's concerns about the future of the industry, now this, and my mind turned to the future of the Union and the Company.

Many of us have been hearing for years that the helicopter industry would need new blood as Vietnam-era pilots retire. In fact, this has probably been the primary selling point for flight schools as they endeavor to justify the massive financial expenditures to prospective students. Not to reopen the old fruitless military/civilian debate - we all understand there are pros & cons to each, with unique costs, risks & opportunities - but let's consider for a moment the singular aspect of whether most of our military-trained pilots would have laid out the money to embark on this career. Many have said that they simply would not. So why should there be any other expectation for future civilian up-and-comers to do so? What about those of us already here? Is this flying career all we hoped it would be?

[Zuccaro mentioned](#) that for many, once they have flown, "the magic has worn off." So then the question turns to what it is that will attract people to this career. Is it the money? Probably not, but it sure helps. Is it prestige? I've heard plenty of proud announcements by my fellow pilots - and made a few myself - of what it is we do, but one could certainly argue that spending over 50% of your time away from home living in a trailer on the bayou isn't exactly prestigious. Is it the *Do What You Love, Love What You Do* or *Turn Your Passion Into A Profession* aspect that these book titles suggest?

Clearly consumed with job-oriented thinking early on, I got a college degree in music and moved to Brazil. Traveling a bit before





returning home, I was exposed to helicopter flight on a 7-minute tour of the Iquaçu Falls in a 206B. I sat up front, looking out the chin bubble for three minutes over trees each way and for one magical minute at the falls. My brilliant revelation?? **“Heeeeeey! That’s cool!”** Fifteen years later, including seven in the GoM, I’m now poised to assume a S76 IFR PIC position, with additional opportunities to gain qualifications in the latest & greatest equipment not far away, but the whole thing stemmed out of an innate pursuit of doing something that I *wanted* to be doing, much more than something that logically pointed toward a stable career or a lucrative job opportunity.

Clearly, with training costs being what they are, I would have never pursued it to a career without the potential to recoup those expenses but the fact is, even in this relatively short time, I have absolutely considered changing careers. Having read comical pieces about *Aviation Induced Divorce Syndrome*, I had no real understanding of the strains this career can put on a relationship. Just look around...

“That’s cool!” may be enough of an idea to get started, but once you’re laying down several hundred dollars for every flight, unsure when or if you’ll ever develop enough proficiency to earn the certificates & ratings to finish training, a stronger conviction has to take hold in order to persevere. Add in the hurdles of all the book work - learning rules & regs, aerodynamics & airspace - and we’ve all seen people choose to simply quit altogether. Those who do continue then proceed to enter working environments with what could be regarded as hyper-regulated procedures and ever-tightening restrictions, not to mention questions about operational control and maintenance. Oh yeah, then there are the risks inherent in choosing an office that is disconnected from the relative security of *terra firma*. Hell, is it any wonder they’re not beating down the doors?

Actually, they may be at the moment, but these issues appear to be returning to the horizon. The Company strategically incorporated the academy into their business but who will they be training? Will enrollment be satisfactory to meet future needs? Will the environment be one in which people want to work? Is there anything *we* can do to attract good people for the long term? Should the Local and the existing workforce even care?

Also, management recently spoke about an upcoming focus on addressing “soft skills;” specifically, communication. We can all benefit from a truly professional workplace, but sometimes ours more resembles a barracks. From expletives lobbed around casually to “jokes,” mockery and idle threats, a neutral observer could easily perceive a great deal of communication to be in direct violation of Company policy. Are we all familiar with the Employee Handbook and the policies, as stated, on Diversity & Inclusion and a Respectful Workplace? I wonder if the NFL has any such policies.

The truth is, our industry is regaining traction and with compensation increasing in other sectors, if Zuccaro is at all correct, future Boards may well be confronted with inquiries from the Company around improving retention. For now, expansion is expected and opportunities are set to proliferate. The Union is positioned well to share in the fruits of this growth, but must keep a watchful eye toward the future.



**PRIDE &
PROFESSIONALISM**

Safety Management System

What kind of safety culture exists in our workplace? What part do you play in it?

It behooves each of us to understand the motivations inherent in the SMS so as to not only ***maintain*** safe operations, but to also ***improve*** our ability to operate safely moving forward. The goal is proactive identification of those conditions or practices that are unsafe or potentially hazardous.

Just as with our individual preparedness to perform the functions of our job, an effective SMS makes it incumbent upon each of us to shift our perception toward a continual awareness of ~ and a readiness to communicate ~ any potential improvements.

Read more at http://flightsafety.org/files/just_culture.pdf

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From http://www.airsafety.aero/safety_development/sms/safety_culture/

Dr James Reason has suggested that safety culture consists of five elements:

- 1 An informed culture
- 2 A reporting culture
- 3 A learning culture
- 4 A just culture
- 5 A flexible culture



In an **informed culture** the organization collects and analyses relevant data, and actively disseminates safety information.

A **reporting culture** means cultivating an atmosphere where people have confidence to report safety concerns without fear of blame. Employees must know that confidentiality will be maintained and that the information they submit will be acted upon, otherwise they will decide that there is no benefit in their reporting.

A **learning culture** means that an organization is able to learn from its mistakes and make changes. It will also ensure that people understand the SMS processes at a personal level.

In a **just culture** errors and unsafe acts will not be punished if the error was unintentional. However, those who act recklessly or take deliberate and unjustifiable risks will still be subject to disciplinary action.

A **flexible culture** is one where the organization and the people in it are capable of adapting effectively to changing demands.

Leadership is central to safety culture:

- 1 The highest standards you can expect from the people you lead or seek to influence are the lowest you exhibit yourself.
- 2 By ignoring low standards you are approving them - you are communicating the message that low standards are acceptable.
- 3 Leadership is the communication of the actions and standards you expect by words, deeds and silence.

If everyone in the company is trained to do their job in a safe manner and proactively looking for hazards you will then be approaching a new level of safety that is behaviour driven. All the elements of a safety culture must be actively encouraged and demonstrated by managers on a regular basis to encourage all staff to participate if this level is to be achieved.

A pretty good SMS with 100% buy-in is infinitely better than a perfect system with 0% commitment.