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Publisher

James K. Coyne

Editor

David W. Almy

Contributing Editors

Michael Ancell
Kelly Creamer

Advertising

For advertising information, call 703/212-4967
or e-mail cstratos@ias-online.net.

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Flight Tracking Software: Moving Beyond a Cool Tool

By Paul Seidenman and David J. Spanovich

When first marketed in the late 1990s, flight tracking data products were considered little more than Internet-based “cool tools” providing aircraft position information but little else. However, modern software technology combined with high speed Internet connections have enabled vendors to offer customers far more capabilities.

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SevenBar: In Business to Save Lives

By David W. Almy

SevenBar is one of the leading air medical transport providers in the Southwest. Based in Dallas, Tex., the company saves lives by safely and reliably transporting patients to where they can best be helped. The story of this remarkable transport provider begins on page 25.

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FAA Examines Operational Control Procedures

By Jacqueline Rosser

For more than a year, the FAA has been examining the operational control procedures of on-demand operators, and it has identified several practices deemed questionable, which has led to the pending release of a new Operations Specification for operational control and a nationwide educational campaign on how to comply with the new standards. Turn to page 33 to learn more.

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Teterboro

A World-Class Airport Community Building a Partnership for the 21st Century

By James K. Coyne, President

Every airport business knows that *their* airport is the most important airport in the world, but at Teterboro Airport in northern New Jersey, they're probably right. It is, simply put, the #1 business aviation airport serving the #1 business community on the globe. Five top-shelf FBOs, hundreds of based aircraft, major aircraft sales and service centers, suppliers, safety and training facilities, and scores of charter or fractional jet operations every day make TEB the crown jewel of America's network of aviation service businesses. Several GA airports may be bigger, a few have more operations, but none is more critical to the global air transportation system.

But even if it is already aviation's top dog, Teterboro aspires to be even better.

As Tiger Woods, Lance Armstrong, or any top athlete will concede, it isn't easy being #1. The press always looks over your shoulder, and Monday morning quarterbacks usually have something to complain about. For world-class airports, the public relations environment can be just as unforgiving. For a while last year, it looked like Teterboro could do nothing right. A serious Challenger accident on takeoff received worldwide press coverage, and several smaller incidents produced a chorus of criticism about safety, noise, and activity levels. Local and federal politicians were drawn to the issue like bees to honey, and some even threatened to close the airport or dramatically curtail operations.

But Teterboro didn't get to be a world-class champion without understanding the fundamentals of airport management and community relations. For years, it has worked to be responsive to local concerns—and they knew that the challenges of 2005 raised questions that had to be answered. By the end of the year, a task force was formed that included all the major aviation businesses, flight department managers, associations, airport management, and representatives

from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the airport's owner. Their challenge: Propose changes in the operations and control of aircraft at TEB, along with new investments and improvements

in the airport itself, which would dramatically reduce the airport's negative impact on the local community and build public confidence in Teterboro's security and safety programs. In short, they wanted to convince even the most hostile political opponents that TEB's management and business operators understood their responsibility to the community.

After three months of hard work, the Teterboro Task Force, which Atlantic Aviation's Joseph G. Fazio and I co-chaired, produced a comprehensive proposal for unprecedented change at Teterboro and submitted their recommendations directly to the Chairman of the Port Authority, Anthony R. Coscia, in April. Each of more than two dozen recommendations were debated within the committee and reviewed by Teterboro Airport Manager Lanny D. Rider and Port Authority General Manager Susan M. Baer as well as by representatives from AOPA, GAMA, NATA, and NBAA. By now, you've probably read about these proposed changes in the aviation media and, more than likely, heard from some quarters that these changes are too bold—or not bold enough.

There's no doubt that we weren't afraid to tackle the toughest issues: a voluntary Stage-II ban, financial disincentives to discourage late-night operations, airspace changes, a ban on flight training, millions of dollars in airport investments to reduce noise and improve safety, mandatory safety management system (SMS) pilot training,



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President's Message

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captain's cards to reinforce safety training and noise abatement procedures, improved security surveillance, donations for nearby communities, and new ATC procedures to cut the number of circle-to-land approaches and significantly reduce noise and emissions. The result, we think, will be a 30 percent reduction in the negative impact of Teterboro aviation on the surrounding community.

The important thing to remember, however, is that these changes reflect the good will and best ideas of those individuals, businesses, and government representatives who really understand Teterboro. How often do we complain about government regulations proposed by some bureaucrat who has only the vaguest understanding of what we do, how and where we do it, and all that our customers expect? Here, we started with a group of experts who know aviation, who know Teterboro, and who understand politics.

The result is an outstanding example of how airport businesses and airport managements can work together in the 21st century to build responsible, productive, and cooperative airport communities—on both sides of the airport fence!

Other airports face the same challenges that have beset Teterboro, and in every case we must be proactive participants in the solutions. Newspapers and politicians love controversy but rarely have a motive to "make things happen." But if we can step in, help build a team that represents all parties, and insist on a definitive timetable for change, then—miracle of miracles—things get done.

If the 21st century is to have the kind of private air transportation capacity that you and I (and our customers) expect, there is surely a lot of "doing" that needs to get done. And if Teterboro can get it done—so can you!

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Teterboro

How One Accident Changed an Industry

By Eric R. Byer, Vice President, Government and Industry Affairs

One crisp, clear winter day in February 2005, it was business as usual at Teterboro Airport in Teterboro, N.J. Located just a few miles outside of New York City (and from this author's childhood residence), Teterboro Airport (TEB) is one of the busiest general aviation airports in the world and arguably one of the most important to our industry. It was during this morning that a Bombardier Challenger CL-600, carrying 11 crew and passengers, crashed into a warehouse across Route 46. Thankfully, no one was killed during the accident, although several aircraft passengers and drivers on the busy highway suffered serious injuries. Although the accident investigation conducted by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is still ongoing, the resulting fallout is already abundantly apparent.

On Capitol Hill, U.S. Rep. Steven Rothman (D-N.J.), a notorious rabble-rouser representing the community surrounding Teterboro Airport, declared, "I have successfully fought to keep big jets and scheduled airline service out of Teterboro. We have had other victories regarding aircraft noise and nighttime flights. But the accident today demonstrates just how dangerous this overall situation has become."

Other members from the New Jersey congressional delegation expressed concern over the accident, including whether TEB's runway was long enough and whether more concrete barriers at the end of the airport's two runways would have prevented the aircraft from leaving airport property and crossing Route 46.

It was also clear that the media was having a field day. *USA Today* opened a Part 135 investigative reporting branch.

Shortly after the accident, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) assembled aviation industry representatives to discuss proactive steps to ensure Part 135 operational safety. As the many entities with ties to the accident were revealed, the FAA issued an Emergency Cease and Desist Order to Platinum Jet Management stemming from an investigation conclusion that Federal Aviation Regulations were violated. Shortly thereafter, the

FAA issued an Emergency Order of Suspension to Darby Aviation d/b/a AlphaJet International for unlawfully allowing Platinum Jet Management to operate passenger-carrying flights for compensation or hire. Last summer, the FAA followed up their Cease and Desist Order by fining Platinum Jet Management more than \$1.8 million for the violations that were discovered.

Late last spring, the FAA created a virtual blacklist of operators that the headquarters staff believed had some troubling similarities to the management agreements seen between the principals of the TEB accident. While most have addressed the FAA's concerns and removed themselves from this list, not all have been so lucky. Just recently in fact, the FAA revoked the Part 135 air carrier operating certificate for American Air Network, Inc., based in Chesterfield, Mo.

So, are you wondering whether or not this is fair? Well, the answer is simple: No, it is not. It is not fair to paint an industry that has an outstanding safety record with the Teterboro brush. It is also unjust that the Part 135 industry is now forced to spend millions of dollars in legal and consulting fees to address FAA inquiries because the FAA has not been promptly weeding out rotten apples and thereby eliminating the potential for the problem.

Even more appalling is that many operators "of concern" to FAA headquarters personnel were operating with the full knowledge and approval of their local FAA-assigned principal inspectors. This all leaves operators wondering exactly from whom they should seek compliance guidance in the future. Operators sought answers from their inspectors as they were told to do, but years later, headquarters decided they didn't agree with that guidance and retroactively held the operator ac-



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Inside Washington

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countable. If an operator cannot take questions to his or her local inspector and reasonably rely on that inspector's answer, the operator is left wondering, "What's the point of even having a local inspector? Does the FAA really expect me to sit around waiting for an opinion from the Chief Counsel's office for every compliance question that comes up?"

These are all fair points, which even the FAA (at least off-the-record) readily admitted. The solution, at least moving forward, is to ensure that clear guidance from headquarters is available and to educate both inspectors and certificate holders on expectations. Thus, an opening appeared.

Last fall, the FAA issued a notice on operational control, and the situation became dire. The aviation industry was close to a regulatory witch-hunt, the likes of which we had never before seen. NATA and NBAA immediately challenged the FAA on its intent behind the notice. During a meeting with senior FAA officials, it became clear that a line would be drawn in the sand and a legislative battle could ensue if agreement on how to proceed could not be reached. At this point, the tenor of the debate changed from "everyone in Part 135 is suspect and probably doing it wrong" to "let's work with the Part 135 industry to ensure that everyone is on the same page and understands their obligations."

This changed approach enabled the FAA, NATA, NBAA, and industry to sit down for a two-day summit in December to resolve the concerns of both sides on operational control, what it is, how it is exercised, and how it is lost. (Please see Jacqueline Rosser's article on operational control beginning on page 33.) As a result of this meeting, an Operations Specification (OpSpec) was drafted and a series of regional meetings were scheduled so FAA headquarters staff, working closely with NATA and NBAA staff, could review the Op-Spec and provide industry and the inspector workforce information on exactly how operational control will be evaluated and how a Part 135 operator should go about running its business. If you are a Part 135 operator and have not yet been able to attend a regional meeting, please try to do so. To learn more, visit NATA's website at www.nata.aero.

Will everyone like what he or she hears during these meetings? Probably not. Is NATA going to push back if the FAA should stray off course? Absolutely. But this is certain: the FAA is not out to get you; it is out to ensure that the Teterboro accident never happens again. And that is something NATA wholeheartedly supports. 

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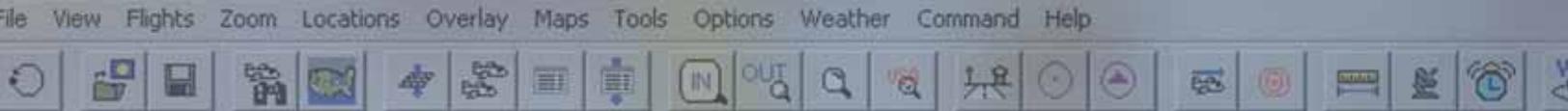
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Flight Tracking Software: Moving Beyond a Cool Tool

By Paul Seidenman and David J. Spanovich

When first marketed to the general aviation industry in the late 1990s, flight tracking data products were considered little more than Internet-based “cool tools,” providing aircraft position information but little else. However, modern software technology combined with high speed internet connections have enabled vendors to offer customers far more capabilities in addition to real-time flight tracking data from air traffic control authorities and/or on-board satellite communications data links.

For the charter firms, fractional ownership companies, corporate flight departments, and FBO users, the benefits of these more robust tracking systems can translate into more competitive and cost-efficient operations.

“What aircraft operators wanted was a comprehensive planning

package that would include real-time flight tracking bundled with en-route and terminal weather data, air traffic control information, and other tools that can predict how all of that might impact scheduling as the flight progresses,” said Chris Zanardi, director of marketing for Flight Explorer. “Those features have allowed users to avoid costly diversions and minimize delays and have also enabled FBOs to improve ground-handling preparation well in advance of an aircraft arrival.”

In fact, better planning was why Richard Fournet, president of Paul Fournet Air Service, selected a Flight Explorer product for his FBO at the Lafayette (La.) Regional Airport. “We have in-plane fueling contracts for four airlines here, and the real-time tracking feature lets us know when to have our employees ready to service an incoming

aircraft just before it arrives,” Fournet said. “The same is true for our regular corporate customers.”

Tom Mekis, vice-president, aircraft sales, charter and management for Landmark Aviation, selected RLM Software’s FlightView system for the firm’s 33-aircraft charter operation because it could track multiple aircraft simultaneously while providing data concerning all aircraft inbound to a specific airport at any one time. “That along with real-time tracking and weather information were considered extremely important to us as a charter operator,” Mekis said.

Flight Explorer and FlightView are just two examples of today’s typical comprehensive flight tracking data systems, in that they are available by subscrip-

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Flight Tracking Software

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tion, web-based, password accessible, and go beyond mere aircraft location tracking. The tracking of a specific aircraft is generated by its registration, or tail number, using a direct feed from the FAA's air traffic control system command center.

For those operators who do not want their aircraft tracked by unauthorized entities, N-numbers can be blocked through BARR (Block Aircraft Registration Request). BARR, established in 1998, is administered by the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) on behalf of the FAA. Under BARR, operators who do not want their aircraft registration numbers displayed for security reasons can fill out a form, giving the aircraft type, model, and tail number. This opt-out request is sent to NBAA, which forwards it to the FAA. The request usually becomes effective within a week and remains in effect until the applicant directs otherwise.

Vendors of aircraft situation display to industry (ASDI) data (as the tracking data is often termed), along with third parties to whom those vendors authorize ASDI data distribution, must sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the FAA agreeing not to distribute the registration number. Failure to comply with the agreement could bar the vendors from receiving the FAA air traffic data feed. According to the NBAA, more than 20 MOAs have been signed to date.

Choosing a flight tracking data package comes down to its features, cost, and how it serves the buyer's specific needs. In an effort to help buyers make an informed choice, *Aviation Business Journal* identified eight vendors that stood out as the major suppliers of comprehensive, fee-based flight tracking data system packages to general aviation. System

descriptions were taken from information supplied by each vendor and include a broad overview of the products and their capabilities. Further information is available from the suppliers, whose contact information is shown on the accompanying chart.

AirNav Systems LLC

AirNav Live Flight Tracker 6, introduced five years ago, is an Internet-based system designed to work on any PC operating any version of Microsoft Windows.

Among the product's primary features are the ability to track airline and general aviation flights throughout the U.S., Canada, and other regions. Real-time display features include cloud cover overlay, updated NEXRAD/Radar weather overlay, and access to METAR/TAF/FAA Airport Status information. In addition to displaying flight plans, users can also take advantage of the software's "Track a Flight and Fleet Watch" functions.

The cost ranges from as little as \$15 to \$1,200, depending on subscription terms and usage, and the system is available on a monthly, quarterly, six-month, or annual renewal basis. Security is ensured by a password-controlled environment, a five-minute delay in the display of actual aircraft data, and sensitive data blocking.

Currently, there are more than 25,000 users, with FBOs and charter operators among the primary users.

The company is also adding Web Tracker, which allows users to track aircraft simply by going to an Internet address, with no additional software requirements. This feature will be available to PDA, Linux, and Mac users.

ARINC, Inc.

WebASD was originally marketed

Manufacturer	Address
AirNav Systems LLC	14221 Dallas Pky. Suite 1500 #11 Dallas, TX 75254 USA
ARINC, Inc.	2551 Riva Road Annapolis, MD 21401
Aviation Data Systems, Inc	321 N Crystal Lake Dr., 3rd Floor Orlando, FL 32803
Flight Explorer	7925 Jones Branch Drive, Suite 1200 McLean, VA 22102
Honeywell (Global Data Center)	15001 NE 36th St. Redmond, WA 98052
Megadata/ PASSUR	47 Arch Street Greenwich, CT 06830
RLM Software	214 Lincoln St. Suite 213 Allston, MA 02134-1346
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as a joint venture of ARINC and Mitre Corporation under the Skysource brand when introduced in the mid-1990s, but it was renamed when ARINC purchased the intellectual property rights from Mitre and dissolved the joint venture.

WebASD is marketed as an ASDI system on both a stand-alone basis and as part of a larger suite of six Internet flight support services known as ARINC Direct. Along with WebASD, they include

Advanced Flight Tracking for General Aviation Operators

Website	Product(s)	Price	Pricing Structure	Contact
www.airnavsystems.com	AirNav Live Flight Tracker 6	\$15 - \$1200 depending on subscription and usage	Subscription based on monthly, quarterly, 6 month, yearly	Akbar Sherwani Sales Representative 214-210-3330 aaks@airnavsystems.com
www.arinc.com	WebASD	\$100 - \$250 per seat/ per month, depending on features and number of users	Both subscription and flat fee are available.	Tim Ryan Director 410-266-4856 tkr@arinc.com
www.fboweb.com	Fboweb.com	Starting at \$9.95 per month	Flat fee monthly subscription	service@fboweb.com
www.flightexplorer.com	Flight Explorer Professional Edition	Base price — \$225-\$325/conn with volume and term discounts. Other services are available at additional charges.	Subscription, flat fee, etc.	Chris Zanardi Dir. of Marketing 703-448-2944 czanardi@flightexplorer.com
www.mygdc.com	Global Data Center (flight following is one of many services offered by GDC)	Per/Aircraft fee, contingent on level of service (1)	Subscription (1)	James Falen, Business Manager 888-634-3330 james.falen@honeywell.com
www.passur.com	PASSUR Portal Pulse	Pricing information is available upon request.	Monthly subscription	Renee Alter (Reg. Sales Dir.) renee.johns.alter@passur.com Peter Masella (Sales Operations Manager) pmasella@passur.com 203-622-4086
www.flightview.com	FlightView Product family (2)	Pricing information is available upon request.	Subscription	Joe Beck Sales Manager 617-787-4200, ext 121 jbeck@flightview.com
www.skynetmobile.com	Inmarsat Aero 500 Iridium S200 SkyNode	\$0 rental to \$12,500	Network access fee and messaging and data	Matt Ryan Sales & Marketing Manager +61 7 3860 5511 (GMT+10) sales@skynetmobile.com

All data appearing in this table was supplied by the vendors.

NOTES

1. Many subscribers have unlimited access to flight following as part of an annual plan. Those who are on a monthly (pay as you go) plan pay \$1.00 to check an aircraft's location via the web. Typical datalink customer pays an annual fee ranging from \$4,500 to 13,500 per aircraft depending on level of service. To put it in perspective, flight following is a value-added service that supplements the flight planning and datalink communications subscription plans. Therefore most subscribers do not pay a separate fee for flight following, as it is included in their subscription plan.
2. Products include Dispatch, XML Datafeed, Monitor, Tracker, FIDS, and NetFids.

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Flight Tracking Software

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up-and-down messaging from the aircraft via data link; flight planning, including airport data such as runway conditions; safe MTOW limits; weather data with text and graphics; flight coordination and support services available 24/7 via Internet and voice phone; and international trip planning.

According to ARINC, most general aviation users of WebASD are ARINC Direct subscribers, who now account for more than 400 operators with more than 800 aircraft. ARINC Direct is Internet-based, password accessible, and available for \$9,500 per year per aircraft. The stand-alone WebASD subscriptions run between \$100 to 250 per seat per month, depending on the number of users and features selected. Flat fee plans are also available.

ARINC Direct has staked out an important niche among owners of very large business jets equipped with air-to-ground data link capabilities and flying under both FAR Part 135 and Part 91 operations as well as among FBOs. ARINC provides software updates for the system on nearly a monthly basis and boasts a 95 percent subscription renewal rate.

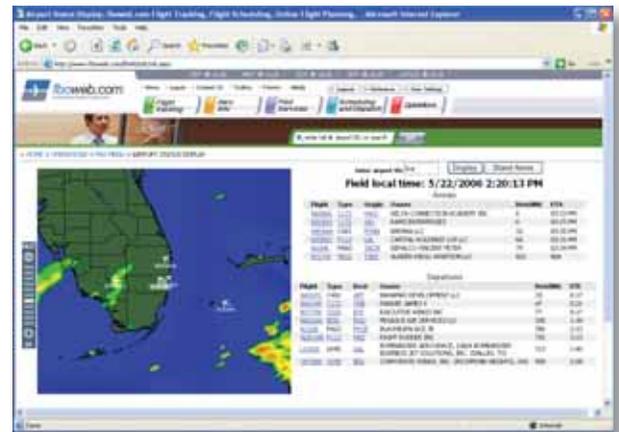
WebASD System requirements mandate a Sun Java plug-in, Version 1.3.1_04 or higher. Among its key features are the display of concurrent multiple geographic views, textual flight lists, a search capability for single or multiple aircraft groups, flight tracking and management tools, and the ability to process and display up to ten distinct groups of aircraft. Other features include display of aircraft data blocks with aircraft-specific flight data, including projection of flight plans and flight history. Overlays include ASDI, ACARS position reports, FANS data, NEXRAD, Satellite Infrared Imagery, Digital ATIS, TWIP, Turbulence Products/Tools, airports, and NavAids.

Security measures include access by password only and a built-in secure socket layer.

Aviation Data Systems, Inc.

Fbweb.com, which has been available since 2000, requires no special software beyond a web browser. The Internet-based service is accessible via PCs or PDAs, including Palm and Microsoft devices.

Among Fbweb.com's key features are domestic and global flight tracking, including three-dimensional tracking with Google Earth, pilot's logbook, airport information, flight planning and flight plan filing systems, and digital online ATIS. Other features include third-party flight tracking for charter operators and business travel departments, along with dispatch services and digital messaging for ground-to-air communications for aircraft



equipped with onboard data link systems.

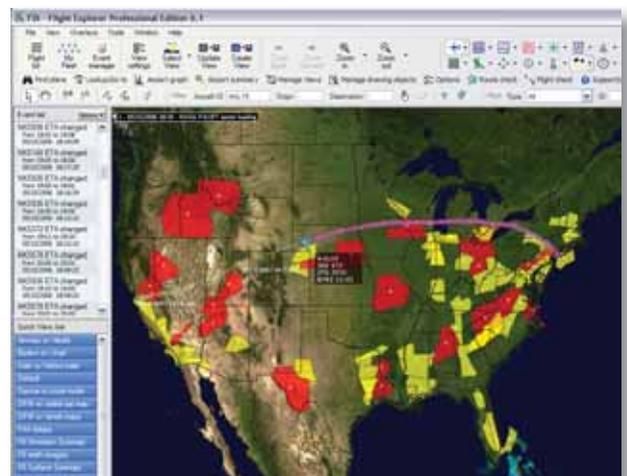
The security provisions include password-controlled access and a selective unblocking feature that provides tracking of tail-number-blocked aircraft, for third parties, per trip for specific accounts.

Fbweb.com is being marketed to all areas of general aviation, including FBO, charter, fractional plans, and corporate operators. The service is available for a flat fee, monthly subscription of \$9.95 per month, with free limited-time trials available on request.

Flight Explorer

Flight Explorer Professional Edition is an advanced, fully integrated, total flight management decision-support package marketed to aircraft operators, airports, and FBOs. Along with flight tracking, the system incorporates multiple data feeds, dynamic weather overlays, situational alerts, and predictive weather and air traffic tools.

An Internet-based system, the package can be run on any PC using Windows XP, 2003, 2000, NT



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Flight Tracking Software

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4.0, Me, or 98 operating systems, although the vendor recommends Windows 2003 or XP. Also recommended is a Pentium 500-mhz class PC with 128 MB RAM, a screen resolution of at least 1280 x 1024, and color depth at least 16 bits (24 or 32 bit preferred). A 32-bit color setting (true color) will provide the best possible display presentation and performance. The vendor also suggests a minimum Pentium 1Ghz and 512 MB RAM for weather animation, street maps, or raster background imagery and a display resolution of at least 1024 x 768 for easy, simultaneous screen and overlay setting manipulation.

Among the product's key features are global data feeds, which provide real-time flight tracking information around the world via the FAA's ASDI feed for IFR traffic, international radar feeds, Honeywell GDC data link, and ACARS.

Flight Explorer's aircraft situational display is now fully integrated with Wingspeed's XLink voice and data communications system, allowing dispatchers to track their aircraft and send voice, data, and text messages to and from the aircraft all through the package's ASD software interface.

Other features include display and animation of North American NEXRAD weather, worldwide IR satellite coverage, and other dynamic weather information, including AIRMETS, SIGMETS, convective SIGMETS, Collaborative Convective Forecast, and real-time lightning.

Among Flight Explorer Professional Edition's other components are flight planning system integration, which enables route-planning information to be sent between Flight Explorer and other flight planning tools already in use. The flight planning feature also incorporates capabilities for route building, checking, and display for one or more preferred routes. For airport information, Flight Explorer Professional Edition displays METARs and TAFs, PIREPs, FAA Delays, sunrise and sunset information, and information from Cellular Pilot, Jeppesen's worldwide airport database, and the AOPA Airport Directory.

The package is available by subscription, with a base price of \$225 to 325 per month per user, with volume and term discounts available. Access is by user ID and password for each connection. System hardware and software architecture meet all current FAA security requirements.

In May, Flight Explorer announced the release of Flight Explorer Professional Edition 6.1. Enhancements include extended route analysis and display capabilities, additional weather information, and customizable airport and aircraft notes.

Honeywell

Global Data Center (GDC), a part of Honeywell's Database and Information Services, includes flight tracking among many other aviation-related services. This is a web-based system and data can be accessed using a PC, hand-held, or standalone system.

GDC is primarily a data-link communications service over most VHF and satellite networks worldwide, providing ATC services to data-link-equipped aircraft along with worldwide flight planning, flight plan filing, flight following, Internet-based and airborne graphical weather, and airport reservations and flight assistance.

GDC offers personalized, airline-level dispatch services through the optional Flight Sentinel. Flight Sentinel also provides flight planning and real-time flight following using FAA transponder reports or aircraft data link, and it is priced at \$5,750 per year per aircraft, with fleet discounts available.

GDC provides aircraft position updates by telephone with a live dispatcher via a BlackBerry device or Microsoft Windows Mobile 5.0 equipped devices (as of the third quarter of 2006). Position updates can also be checked through a data-link request. For Flight Sentinel, Honeywell also supports AFISCOM Express, a stand-alone Windows-based application that provides a flight following map but no weather overlay.

Along with aircraft tracking over a displayed map, GDC is used to create flight plans and can overlay graphical weather data on the map simultaneously with aircraft position or flight plan routes. It can also be used to create customized groups of aircraft for flight following purposes,



Continued on page 22



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Flight Tracking Software

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such as U.S. or European-based fleets or specific aircraft types.

GDC customers include FBOs; corporate, charter, and fractional plan operators; and private jet operators, most of whom fly mid- to large-size business jets. In fact, GDC claims approximately 70 to 75 percent of the data-link market for business jets.

Honeywell expects to release an upgraded Internet-based map later this year with more features and finer map resolution. Also, access to the FAA's ETMS system, which provides user access to the FAA's flight data, will be added.

GDC is password and user-ID controlled, and it incorporates standard Internet browser security levels. Subscriptions for the typical data-link customer range from \$1,300 to 4,500 per aircraft annually, depending on the level of services selected. For example, GDC offers a Worldwide plan that tracks aircraft positions globally via data link. Less costly versions include a Western plan, covering North and South America, and an Eastern plan for Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. Flight follow-

ing supplements the data-link communications plans and is included at no additional fee for most customers.

Megadata/PASSUR

Megadata/PASSUR has offered PASSUR Portal and Pulse to the general aviation market for the past year. Both are web-hosted applications and are password controlled using standard Internet connections via a PC. Portal and Pulse offer direct web access to PASSUR's database of live and historical flight information drawn from the company's radar network, which is installed in the U.S., Canada, and at locations outside North America. Security measures for the PASSUR radar network and database "meet or exceed government mandates for the handling of real-time flight information," according to the vendor.

Portal provides real-time fleet tracking and airport condition data and is used by corporate flight departments and charter operations as a safety, security, and decision-making tool. It is marketed as a real-time snapshot of an operation's "vital signs" presented on a web dashboard, which includes the unique PASSUR estimated time of arrival algorithm, detailed aircraft identification with tail numbers, active runway configuration, weather, upcoming arrival and departure demand, on-time status alerts, instant messaging, and electronic bulletin posting.

Pulse caters to the FBO operator, offering access to complete activity reports at specific airports drawn from a database of flight and aircraft owner/operator information, making it a significant marketing tool. In addition, its real-time data delivery makes FBO operations more efficient as customer service and line service people are well prepared in advance of any aircraft arrival, allowing the FBO to focus on its most profitable customers.

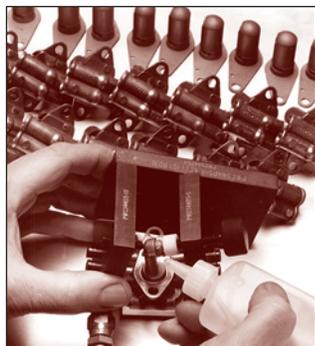
Portal and Pulse are sold as monthly subscriptions, with pricing based on the configuration and level selected.

RLM Software

FlightView is a family of products offering advanced flight tracking using radar and air traffic control data to generate real-time information on all U.S. and Canadian IFR air traffic. Products include Dispatch, XML Datafeed, Monitor, Tracker, FIDS, and NetFIDS. Available since 1992, the FlightView family has been marketed to airlines,

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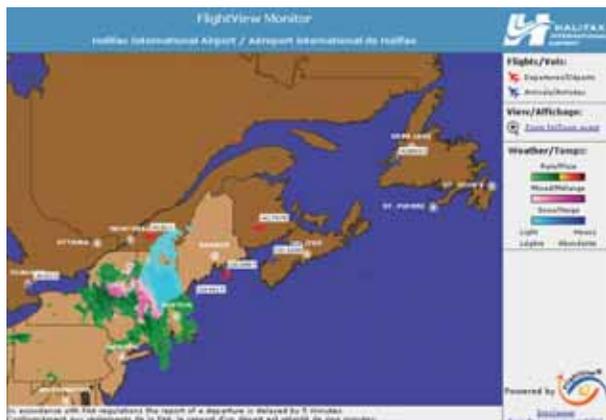


corporate flight departments, charter operators, fractional ownership plans, FBOs, and airport authorities.

The FlightView products are Internet-based and can be used with a PC, hand-held device, or stand-alone system. For FlightView Dispatch, minimum requirements are the Windows 2000 or later operating system, Pentium 1Ghz, 1 gigabyte hard disk space, with 256 MB RAM. Other FlightView products require Microsoft Explorer Version 6 or later.

FlightView Dispatch provides real-time aircraft situational display, with ETAs continually updated. It includes complete airport traffic updates, through web queries or stationary display, and advanced weather data products, including TFRs. The information is compatible with large screen display systems, making it suitable for multiple users.

FlightView Dispatch is available by subscription, per number of users, while Tracker and XML Datafeed are billed by the number of queries. Monitor, Terminal FIDS, and NetFIDS are priced based on airport size. Access is password controlled.



SkyNet Mobile Communications

Inmarsat Aero 500 and Iridium S200 SkyNode are the two aviation tracking services offered by this Brisbane, Australia-based company. Available for the past six years, both are Internet-based and accessible with a PC, hand-held device, or other stand-alone system. Data is generated by a low-cost, onboard satellite modem, which is linked to SkyNet's web-based global aero tracking system. Access requires user authentication.

While each uses a different satellite system, both products feature real-time flight following, flight management, global mapping, voice communication, fleet map views, ETA, automated ETA SMS/email service, and fleet timeline progress in comparison to schedules. Other features offered are custom reusable route generation, IATA and ICAO name databases, and duress alarm event monitoring.

FBO, charter operators, fractional plans, corporate flight departments, and airlines have been among the markets for the two products, which are priced based on network access and messaging data.




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SevenBar: In Business to Save Lives

By David W. Almy



Late on a warm, hazy Wednesday afternoon in Dallas, a Citation is on an inbound taxi to a secluded hangar at Love Field. It's a common enough scene, and one not warranting a great deal of attention at the most active business aviation airport in Texas. With seven FBOs in residence, one more Citation scurrying across Love Field is just one more business jet.

But this flight is a very special mission for one very tiny passenger.

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“You have to have a servant’s heart and a passion about our mission, which is the hospital’s mission. So we have to look a lot harder to find that person. And we’ve been lucky to have a lot of applicants with all the technical skills, but also with the right attitude.”

—Bill Koch, SevenBar President

SevenBar

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The first clue is found in the lettering on the engine nacelle, which spells out “Children’s Medical Center,” where the “i” in “Children’s” is a string curling up to a red balloon. For more than 90 years, Children’s Medical Center Dallas has treated sick kids supported by highly trained medical and clinical staffs using advanced technology—in this case, a Cessna.

The second clue is the gurney wheeled up to the door just as the plane pulls to a stop. Three medical technicians, aided by one of the plane’s pilots, gingerly move

newborn Ignacio Zenobi into a waiting ambulance for the short drive to the hospital, accompanied by his watchful mother. Early the next day, Ignacio will undergo surgery at the only Dallas hospital that deals exclusively with children from birth to age 18.

On call 24/7/365, aircraft from the SevenBar fleet can launch within 30 minutes to transport patients to and from five base airports in the southwest United States.

Aircraft dedicated to the Children’s Medical Center and several other SevenBar clients have completed thousands of air medical transport flights since beginning operations in the 1970s. They have logged more than 50,000

hours along the way, and all without a single accident.

The safe, reliable, and rapid movement of patients like little Ignacio is what air medical transport is all about.

A Dirt Strip

“My grandfather started this business nearly

60 years ago,” said Wade Black, SevenBar’s 41-year-old CEO. “He learned how to fly prior to World War II. My great uncle also was a pilot in the Army Air Corps during the war, flying gliders for instance into France on D-Day.”

“After World War II, they decided that they wanted to continue flying, so they built a dirt strip behind my grandparents’ ranch house in 1947. That became the foundation of our aviation business today,” Black said.

From that dirt strip on the SevenBar Ranch in New Mexico, the company built hangars and started supplying fueling services for transient and based aircraft.

“It wasn’t until the 1950s that

my father got involved in the business,” Black continued. “He started pumping gas, learned how to fly, and then started to teach other people how to fly. Together, they expanded that airport—my dad and my grandfather—that began as a dirt strip by laying out the first asphalt runway themselves. It truly is a grassroots aviation company.”

In the late 1950s, SevenBar began a relationship with Exxon and Cessna. “My dad sold Cessnas up until 1979, and we also were a Mooney dealer up through the 1970s,” he said.

In 1982, the company expanded with the addition of a second FBO, Sun Valley Aviation in Hailley, Idaho. “My father had a lot of customers that he’d been selling aircraft to since the late 1960s, and my family had been going up there on vacation,” Black said. “When that opportunity arose, he bought the business over the Christmas and New Year’s holiday, which I remember at the time did not earn a whole lot of brownie points with the family, but it turned out to be a pretty good business decision.”

By 1986, the growth of Albuquerque overtook the ranch, forcing the closure of the original airfield, which is now developed. “So we partnered with another family to build a new facility for SevenBar Flying Service from the west side of the international airport, which is where we are today. In 1999, we added Four Corners Aviation as the SevenBar Four Corners operation, in Farmington, N. Mex.,” Black said. This rounded out the FBO business.

Today, in addition to the FBOs, SevenBar holds six contracts in five cities for air medical services for hospitals, typically bringing patients into those hospitals from a radius of 300 nautical miles.

“We’ll go out with the medical team to transport the patient to the hospital for specialized care that they can’t otherwise access,”

SevenBar crews are focused on doing what is best for their patients, like little Ignacio Zenobi, shown here. Crewmembers find their efforts very rewarding, and Ignacio's mother (at left) finds them very comforting.



said Bill Koch, SevenBar Enterprises president and COO.

Air Medical Transport

Paralleling the development of the company's FBO and aircraft sales business, the company began its air medical transport operation in the late 1970s. That side of the business today counts a fleet of nine air medical aircraft and two conventional charter aircraft, all fixed-wing, including Raytheon King Air C90s and E90s, B200s, a Cessna Citation II, and an IAI Westwind II. In total, about 150 employees help generate about \$25 million in annual revenue.

To achieve that, the aircraft rarely are in the company's hangars, racking up 600-800 hours per year per aircraft, and are on standby 24/7.

"Most contracts require us to be

ready to dispatch in 20 minutes," Koch said. "That requires incredible discipline in maintenance as well as a working relationship between the pilots and the maintenance technicians that anticipate needs beyond the routine. We really have to operate at a higher level to maintain incredibly high dispatch reliability."

"In the case of 'all-hands-on-deck,' we'll bring out all the crews for something like Hurricane Katrina," Koch added. "We were among the first in the immediate aftermath of the storm to start flying. The closest we could get was Baton Rouge. Helicopters were going to the rooftop of Tulane Hospital for Children and the New Orleans Children's Hospital, bringing patients out to the Baton Rouge Airport, where we would pick them up and evacuate them to Houston or Dallas, to

get those kids the care that they needed. It was a very exciting time for us."

"We get a whole lot of joy and satisfaction out of working with the hospitals that are our customers," Black said. "They truly are making a difference in the world. It's good to be able to contribute and have a lot of fun doing it. It's very rewarding. These crews—their hearts are into doing what's best for the patient, and it's a lot of fun being associated with that. We're very proud to have worked in that area for almost 30 years. We've built a great reputation and have an impeccable safety record at providing that type of service, and we do a very good job."

Two backup aircraft provide surge capacity or maintenance loaners. The pilots are dedicated to specific city bases where Sev-

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“If you can put someone else’s needs ahead of your own, you can work here. Our mission is for the greater good, for our community. It can be helping a medical team carry an IV bag, doing things that are totally outside of just flying the airplane. It’s those little things that make our people special. We’re here to support the hospital medical teams, to make their job easier. Our people have to buy into that team approach.”

—Wade Black, SevenBar CEO

SevenBar

Continued from page 27

enBar has long-term relationships with its hospital customers.

“There are only a handful of operators in this business, the fixed-wing air medical business, and we enjoy just an outstanding relationship with our customers,” Koch said. “These hospital clients are truly evangelists for SevenBar. Part of our ability to grow is due to our long-term relationship with these clients and their absolute

commitment to safety, safety, safety first. We’re not the biggest, but we certainly strive to be the absolute best.”

SevenBar recently passed the 50,000-hour mark in safe flying operations and is logging about 4,000 hours per year, fleet-wide.

Growth Plans

Koch sees continued growth in the company’s two major lines of business—fixed base operations and air medical services. “We’re actively pursuing opportunities on the FBO side,” he said. “But you may have noticed that there have been quite a few acquisitions there lately, and prices are high, for us. Our objective is to be long-term owners, operators,

for the next 20 years or more. We have a different methodology, a different math than some of the new entrants to the markets—the private equity and new entrants who have been making FBO acquisitions. So we continue to explore that.”

“What fractional ownership has been over the last ten years is the biggest and best thing for our industry in terms of overall growth,”

Koch said. “New entrants generate additional aircraft utilization. It’s certainly been good for all FBO operators, but curiously, most of that fractional ownership traffic occurs in the same top markets as corporate jet utilization, an almost identical pattern. About 70 percent of that new traffic volume is in the top 50 or 75 major markets.”

“I think the next big thing is the entry of VLJs into the market in a very big way over the next few years. So as you look 10 or 15

years out, I don’t think that VLJ owners are going to match that pattern nearly as closely as the fractionals did. I think that a lot of the VLJ owners are going to prefer to use new and different airports in more outlying communities, so I think it is going to create new markets among existing airports that are currently not major business aviation centers.”

Black agrees. “Business today has changed so much,” he said. “Our business has evolved so far from one of the grassroots general aviation companies that emerged after World War II to today, where we’ve seen so much consolidation, so many businesses which have changed hands, with so many corporations now running the business.”

“Our challenge is to maintain our identity and culture as a family business and carry it for the next several generations,” Black said. “Our corporate family has to keep working together and provide great service to our customers and support to our hospitals. That takes the right personality, the right employee. Our challenge is to identify the right people to continue that identity. We’ve been very fortunate to have the right people that we do.”

“We love the people in business aviation,” Koch said. “We find it personally very rewarding. So, while it is changing—there is a high level of sophistication, there’s globalization, all these trends underway—we are a people relationship business company, very much a company with strong family values. We are blessed with great people who feel this is home and have been with us for a long time. That’s a test of a great, progressive company.”

“Our customers also have to fit our company culture,” added Kim Montgomery, vice president of business development. “We find a lot of people with whom we really can’t have a long-term relationship because they have a

Continued on page 46



Together, we make Workers Comp workable.

As an aviation industry professional, we don't have to tell you how rough the skies have become. You probably know better than most. So let's skip directly to the part about how you might actively make the insurance part of your business a little more workable.

As an NATA member, you may be eligible to participate in one of the association's Workers Compensation Programs. One program is underwritten by USAIG, the other by Phoenix Aviation Managers, both are administered by AirSure Limited. Just as flying in a V formation means more efficiency for the flock, joining a group of other aviation businesses could mean better coverage for less money with your Workers Comp insurance.

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the odds. In 28 of the past 30 years, the USAIG plan has paid nearly \$45 million in good experience returns, averaging 19.26%. The Phoenix Program, which started a few years ago, just earned its first good experience return in 2005. That's what we call making Workers Comp . . . workable.

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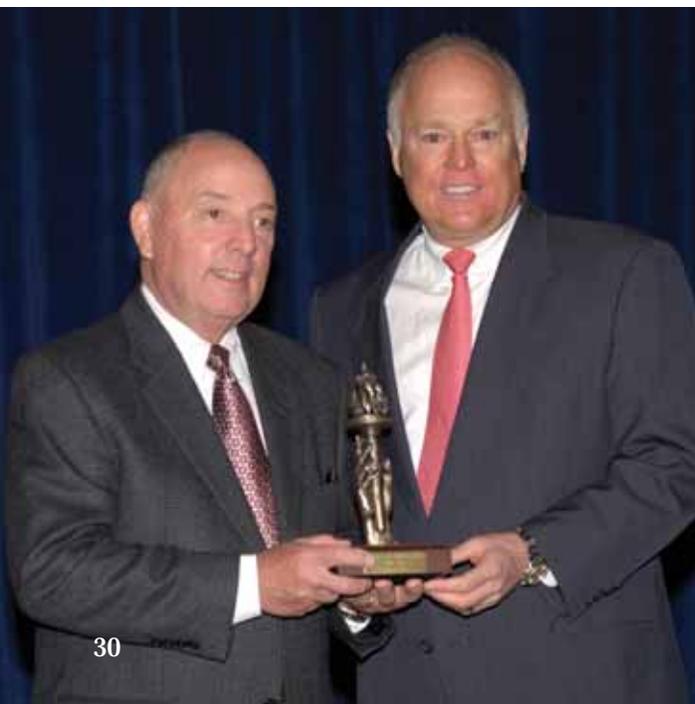
NATA 2006

NATA's 2006 annual meeting and convention again returned to Las Vegas, Nev., this spring. Highlights included a series of seminars attended by hundreds of NATA members, the FAA's first operational control briefing, NATA's annual awards ceremony, and comments by several distinguished speakers. More than 5,000 attendees participated in the joint NATA/PAMA/GES event, which is scheduled for Orlando, Fla., in 2007.

Below, the 2005 William Ong Memorial Award was presented to Charlie Priester (left) of Priester Aviation LLC by NATA President James K. Coyne on March 28. This was the first time the Ong Award has honored both a father (George Priester) and his son (Charlie). Named in honor and memory of William A. "Bill" Ong, the association's co-founder and first president, the award acknowledges extraordinary achievement and extended meritorious service to the general aviation industry. Charlie is chairman and CEO of Priester Aviation, a rapidly growing company that manages and charters nearly 30 jet aircraft nationwide and provides a variety of aircraft administrative and management services.



Hundreds attended NATA seminars at the convention, including well more than 100 at the line service supervisor training session (above) and a full house at the inaugural FAA operational control meeting.



Right, Air Transport Association President Jim May made an impassioned and reasoned pitch for user fees to the NATA audience, and he also took questions. May represents the major scheduled airlines in Washington, D.C., and has been the leading national advocate for user fees for the nation's air traffic control system. The full text of his speech can be found at www.airlines.org.





Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich provided the keynote address for NATA's opening general session with rousing remarks on the theme of "Real change requires real change." Widely regarded as a Republican presidential candidate, Gingrich spoke about the power of the private sector and the need to reform the federal government—again—on many levels. Information on Gingrich's activities can be found www.newt.org.



Right, the 2005 NATA Distinguished Service Award was presented to Mike Delk (right) of Air BP by NATA President James K. Coyne. The NATA Distinguished Service Award is given to an individual or organization still active in general aviation on a regular, day-to-day basis and recognizes outstanding service and ongoing contributions to the industry. Mike is president of Air BP in the United States and continues to be hands-on by developing business plans for dealers and finding creative ways to grow their businesses, all while keeping the family business values at hand.



Garrett Aviation, Piedmont Hawthorne, and Associated Air Center are now Landmark Aviation. Landmark Aviation represents the joining together of three respected aviation companies with one shared goal: to provide our business aviation customers with an unprecedented level of service and expertise.

Together, these companies have over 150 years of industry experience and innovation, yet their core areas of expertise are uniquely complementary. Landmark Aviation is now a network of 43 locations nationwide with over 2,500 dedicated professionals. We operate one of the largest FBO networks in North America and, within this network, we can perform the broadest range of aircraft services - from line service to heavy maintenance, and

from basic repair and overhaul to complete retrofits. Landmark aviation also offers an effective mix of aircraft sales, charter, and management services.

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FAA Examines Operational Control Procedures

By Jacqueline Rosser



For more than a year, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has been examining the operational control procedures of on-demand operators. As part of this still ongoing investigation, the FAA has taken a closer look at how Part 135 certificate holders obtain aircraft and the logistics of how the air carrier maintains control over flights operated under the certificate authority.

Unfortunately, despite the laudable safety record of on-demand air charter, FAA headquarters officials were not pleased with what was revealed by the investigation. The FAA identified several practices they deem questionable, which has led to the pending release of a new Operations Specification (OpSpec) for operational control and a nationwide educational campaign on how to comply with the new standards.

But what exactly is “operational control”? Attempting to clearly answer that question is at the heart of the FAA’s new OpSpec. Part 1 of the Federal Aviation Regulations states, “Operational control, with respect to a flight, means the exercise of authority over initiating, conducting, or terminating a flight.” In attempting to understand the intent of the FAA, the common definition of “control” is perhaps more illustrative of the agency’s expectations. Webster’s dictionary states that control is “to exercise restraining or directing influence over” and “to have power over.”

In the simplest of terms, the FAA wants all Part 135 on-demand operators to understand that they, as the entity authorized to conduct commercial air carrier operations, must not only be knowl-

edgeable of flights operated under the certificate, but must be in control of those flights. A passive awareness of activity, particularly if notification is post-flight, is insufficient. Determining if and under what circumstances flights will occur, assigning flight crews, ensuring aircraft airworthiness, and flight dispatch/release functions must all have active involvement and oversight from the certificate holder.

Also important, and a key issue in the OpSpec, is the relationship between the certificate holder and pilots. The OpSpec describes, in some detail, the acceptable relationships between pilots and certificate holders. Pilots, when conducting Part 135 operations, must be either an employee or agent of the air carrier. Agent, in this context, is used to mean that the certificate holder is responsible for the actions of the pilot and the pilot is accountable to the certificate holder.

In the case of a managed aircraft, the agreement with the aircraft owner must not require that any

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Operational Control

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particular pilots are used; however, the certificate holder may have an independent agreement with pilots that are also employed by the aircraft owner.

Many operators are concerned about the impact of the new OpSpec, which is expected to be finalized this fall. While many of the directives within the OpSpec simply reiterate existing regulatory requirements, many opera-

tors will find that they need to revise existing aircraft management agreements, ensure proper relationships exist with pilots, and conduct an overall review of their operational control procedures to ensure compliance. The best way to be prepared for any eventual changes and to guard against a negative impact is to participate in the process.

The briefing sessions presented by FAA staff are not only an opportunity to educate Part 135 operators, aircraft owners, and

inspectors, but also to receive feedback on the new OpSpec. Following every briefing event to date, revisions to the OpSpec, based upon feedback from attendees, have occurred.

Operators unable to attend a session in person are encouraged to review the FAA presentations and the current version of the draft OpSpec. These documents and more are available via the Part 135 Operational Control Issues Hot Button at www.nata.aero. 

Operational Control Dos & Don'ts

So how does all this talk of “operational control” apply to you as an air carrier? Would your operation’s procedures draw unwanted attention from the FAA? NATA has compiled the following list based on materials presented at the FAA’s operational control briefing sessions.

This list is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to be legal guidance. It is provided to help operators begin an evaluation of their operational control system and help certificated air carrier’s determine if their procedures might be of concern or require modification. Not all of the procedures outlined below will apply to every operation, and a particular activity in and of itself does not necessarily indicate a loss of operational control. Rather, these items are areas that could lead to further evaluation of an air carrier’s operational control system by the FAA. Contact qualified aviation counsel if you have specific concerns.

DO

- Ensure that your crewmembers and support staff are educated in your operational control procedures, including Operations Specification (OpSpec) A008 once issued, and that your procedures for ensuring operational control remain with you as the air carrier.
- Exercise caution should you choose to use a pilot that is employed by the owner of aircraft you manage and operate under Part 135. If you use the owner’s pilots, be sure of the following:
 - Your written agreement with the owner does not require the use of the owner’s pilots (or any other specific pilot) for Part 135 flights;
 - Your written agreement with the owner does not require the owner to provide a crewmember;
 - You, as the air carrier, either directly employ

the crew or have agreement between you and the pilot that is acceptable to the FAA (see next bullet); and

- If you do not employ all crewmembers utilized in Part 135 operations, the pilots must enter into an agreement with you whereby they are designated as your agent. The agency agreement must demonstrate to the FAA that the crew is liable and obligated to you as the air carrier and not to the aircraft owner for all activity related to Part 135 operations. Be true to both the letter and the spirit of this agency agreement.
- Know the crewmembers’ currency and qualification status before allowing the crew to operate any flight under your control.
- Designate a pilot in command.
- Ensure that your assigned crewmembers know whether the flight is Part 91 or Part 135.
- Know the aircraft. Be sure the aircraft continually meets your Part 135 maintenance requirements.
- Know your aircraft’s location/status. The FAA has repeatedly stated that it is unacceptable for your aircraft to be conducting a commercial operation under your certificate authority and for you to be notified of this activity, especially if you are notified after the fact. As the certificate holder, you should be dictating all commercial aircraft activity, not simply receiving notification from third parties of Part 135 activity.
- Know the aircraft’s expected whereabouts. You are not required to have real-time flight following or monitoring; however, when commercial flights are conducted, knowledge of approximately where the aircraft is en-route, its expected location, and time of arrival are all part of a good operational control system.
- Confirm with the aircraft owner that his or her insurance and financing documents contain

no prohibitions on use of the aircraft in commercial operations.

- Emphasize to your crewmembers the importance of following procedures established in your General Operating Manual when contact with the air carrier is not practical (e.g., remote locations, transoceanic flights, etc.).
- Be sure your passengers know YOU as the air carrier are operating the flight. Invoices, advertising materials, and other documents given to passengers should not give passengers the mistaken impression that someone other than the actual certificate holder is conducting the flight.
- Consider having the crew give a passenger briefing for any flight under the air carrier's operational control, detailing the air carrier's name, that the flight will be conducted under Part 135 rules, and that the air carrier has operational control of the flight.
- Review your existing agreements with aircraft owners and crewmembers to ensure operational control remains with the air carrier for all operations conducted by the certificate holder.
- Review any other business names (DBAs) on your certificate. Be sure the DBA exists for a legitimate business reason and not to obscure the responsibility or liability for commercial flights.
- If you have a significant number of DBAs on your certificate, consider dropping those which have outlived their usefulness. A large number of DBAs on any certificate (more than a few) are a red flag to the FAA.

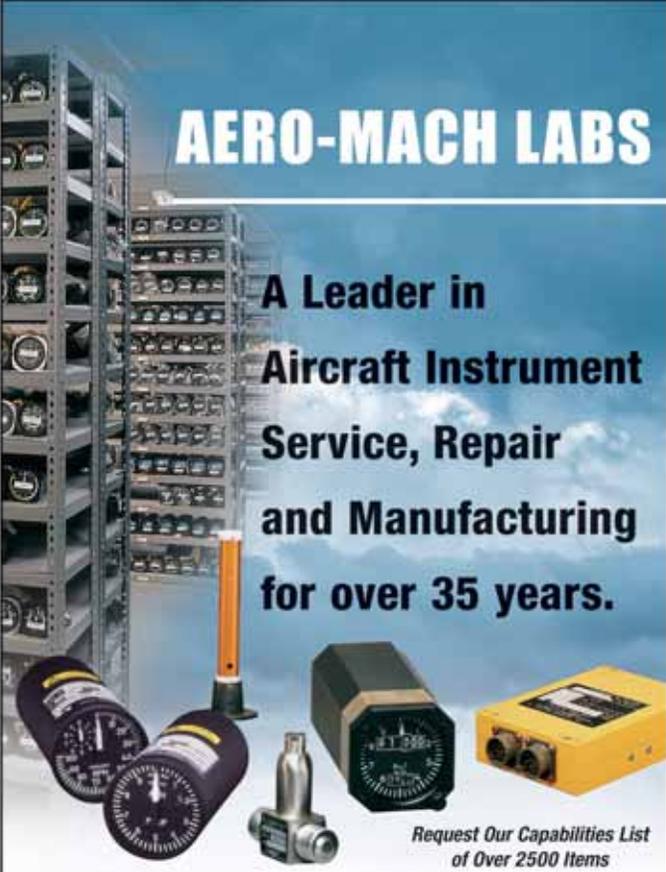
DON'T

- Assume this talk of operational control doesn't apply to you or your operation. Variations of OpSpec A008 will be distributed to single-pilot operations and other operations as the FAA sees fit. Virtually every Part 135 on-demand certificate holder will be issued this OpSpec.
- Allow an aircraft owner to accept charter flights from the public.
- Allow aircraft owners to accept payment or compensation for flights.
- Allow an aircraft owner to invoice for flights.
- Leave or add DBAs to your certificate that are unnecessary or that represent third parties outside of your control.
- Allow an aircraft owner to establish a DBA on your certificate in their name.
- Use a pilot employed by an aircraft owner without establishing an agency agreement directly with the crewmembers.
- Assign crewmembers without knowing their currency and qualification status.
- Allow an aircraft owner to take an aircraft from your physical possession for extended periods without maintaining contact with the owner. Regular reports of hours and cycles are necessary to keep the aircraft compliant with your Part 135 maintenance program. The FAA is especially concerned with how airworthiness for future Part 135 operations is ensured in these situations.



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The Impact of User Fees on General Aviation

In the coming weeks, the FAA will release its proposal for funding the nation's air traffic control system following the expiration of the ticketing and fuel taxes next year. Currently, general aviation operators pay into the aviation trust fund through a fuel tax of 21.9 cents per gallon for aviation jet fuel and 19.4 cents per gallon for aviation gasoline. Furthermore, on-demand air charter operators pay the same ticket and fuel taxes as scheduled airlines due to their classification as commercial operators.

NATA has long argued that the fuel tax for non-commercial general aviation is the best method for paying into the aviation trust fund because it guarantees a consistent and efficient stream of funding.

User fees would deal a significant blow to business and general aviation in the United States for a variety of reasons:

Increased cost to non-scheduled operators.

Airline advocates have argued that all eligible

operations pay the same fee because air traffic control does not differentiate between types of aircraft and must treat each aircraft that uses air traffic control services the same. This argument fails to account for the fact that airline travel is what drives the cost of air traffic control services and that general and business aviation are incremental users of the system.

Less general aviation activity. User fees would undoubtedly result in many operators flying on a much less frequent basis due to the increased costs of using the aviation system. Less activity will have a large ripple effect throughout the industry, with many businesses suffering due to less fuel sales, maintenance projects, and other services.

A tremendous administrative burden. Virtually all countries that utilize a user fee system have adopted a method of billing system users for the amount of air traffic services used after their particular flight. None of these countries, however, have nearly the level of general aviation activity as the United States. A system of after-the-fact bills would result in a massive administrative hassle for all general aviation pilots. Companies would have to employ significant resources for verifying the bill and ensuring its accuracy. With thousands of bills being generated daily, there is a great chance that a significant number of these bills would be erroneous, leading to endless red tape to correct the errors.

The current fuel tax ensures that the aviation trust fund receives the appropriate contribution the minute the fuel is purchased, without having to wait weeks and possibly even months for payment.

Control over the aviation system. The FAA has long maintained that any user fee system will employ a "user pays, user says" philosophy. This philosophy indicates that user fees will also mean the creation of a board of directors made up of industry stakeholders that would dictate aviation policy and funding priorities. Such a board would almost certainly skew in the direction of airlines, who could use the new governing body to steer aviation funds to larger airports and programs disproportionately beneficial to the airline industry.

NATA feels that Congress remains the strongest voice for a fair and equitable air transportation system and that decisions over the future of the system should reside with elected officials.



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Call to Action

Contact your members of Congress and inform them of the devastating impact a user fee system could have on general aviation in the United States. Explain that the current system of taxes and fees is the most fair and efficient way for all users of the national air transportation system to contribute to the aviation trust fund. Remind them of the importance general aviation plays in the nation's air transportation system and that user fees would significantly alter the makeup of the industry.

NATA has drafted a form letter for you to download, customize, and mail/fax to your legislators regarding the user fee issue. It is available at www.nata.aero.

How to Contact Your Members of Congress

To identify your Representative in the U.S. House, including address, phone, fax, and email information, go to www.house.gov, insert your zip code in the "Find Your Representative" box at the top of the page, and click enter. You can obtain contact information for your Senators at www.senate.gov. Or you can call the Capitol switchboard at (202) 225-2131 and ask the operator to connect you to your Representative's or Senator's office. Upon being connected to these offices, ask to speak to the staff member who handles transportation issues. 

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Membership Has Its Privileges— the Latest on NATA Safety 1st

Over the span of three days in March, aviation operators and support organizations came together at the NATA Convention in Las Vegas, Nev., to discuss the state of the industry and a wide variety of aviation issues. Notably focused on the agenda was NATA's Safety 1st Management System (SMS) for Ground and Air Charter. At this year's convention, FAA and TSA senior leadership prominently participated in many of the main sessions and committee meetings.

The message is that the FAA supports NATA's SMS and is producing an Advisory Circular outlining its acceptance of common SMS elements. A clear win for the industry! NATA's efforts will be out in front, providing members with proven tools to change safety culture and performance.

One of the major convention highlights came via Jim Ballough, ASD-1 of FAA, committing to

provide NATA SMS with sanitized aircraft-specific event data to provide operators and support organizations with aircraft-specific failure, incident, and accident data.

NATA hosted a session addressing the successes and challenges with SMS implementation, and participants discussed how incidents and accidents are preventable through the full implementation of either the Ground or Air Charter SMS initiatives. Dawn Letellier, safety coordinator for Business Aviation Services in Sioux Falls, Idaho, reported on her company's successful implementation of the SMS. Most significant was Letellier's insight on the continued support of the company's senior management, which she described as key to Business Aviation Service's success.

That point was driven home by Lou Sorrentino

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Safety Watch

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and Greg Feith (Former NTSB IIC), who addressed the role of senior management in an organization's safety performance. The clear message was that senior management must play a continuous role in SMS development. It was pointed out that businesses could not just purchase a safety program and presume its effectiveness. Rather, senior leadership must be just that, leaders who grasp the importance of the SMS subject matter and then direct, delegate, nurture, and support SMS implementation and continued progress. Anything less and the people assigned to implement the SMS program across all departments may experience challenges that will test the resolve of the organization's ability to improve safety performance.

NATA's SMS remains the single most cost-effective tool to enhance quality and safety awareness across all departments. Enhanced awareness translates to enhanced safety performance. By supporting the SMS program, businesses will experience fewer incidents and accidents—exactly what senior leadership is searching for. 

Professional Line Service Update

NATA Safety 1st Professional Line Service (PLST) participants have received the updated materials on CD-ROM for the 2006 fiscal year.

If you have not renewed your participation, letters have gone out concerning your renewal fee as well as the requirement to train, test, and certify all of your line personnel in the new year. Each year we add exciting training to our program, and this year was no exception.

Here's what's new and exciting on the 2006 PLST CD-ROM:

- NATA Safety 1st lesson plans for interactive training or to spice up your safety meetings.
- Past issues of all our monthly online newsletter, the NATA Safety 1st eToolkit. Widely read and enthusiastically received, each issue provides pertinent safety tools that can easily be put into place on every ramp.
- A training presentation for special events at your FBO in the Special Events Training folder. This powerful training tool will quickly bring up to speed any line techs that are on loan from other FBOs to assist with your large event. You know they've been NATA Safety 1st trained, but you want to assure they know about the specifics at your location. After they view your presentation, show them you are serious with the ramp safety quiz.
- 2006 PLST Certification checklist. Assure your paperwork is right the first time!
- NATA Safety 1st logos. Your marketing logos for brochures, advertising, and other promotional literature.

The following items have been updated:

- Aircraft Ground Service Guide,
- Aircraft Towing Guide,
- Employee Career Reference Guide,
- Trainer's Guidebook,
- 2006 NATA Safety 1st product brochure and order form,
- 2006 LSST seminar schedule, the NATA Safety 1st Trainer seminar schedule and other valuable training opportunities, and
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NATA Unveils First DVD Training Aid

NATA Safety 1st recently unveiled the first of a series in the NATA SMS series of DVD training aides. The *Operation Standards—Ramp Communication Module 1* DVD was developed to educate pilots and ground support personnel on the complexities of each other's jobs while establishing the core components of the professional ramp. The professional ramp is comprised of professional line service technicians who are trained to practice clear, concise hand signals and accurate radio communication, utilize personal protective equipment and appropriate ramp tools (chocks, cones, day/night wands, etc.), and understand the complexities of pilots' and passengers' needs.

The new DVD will be available this summer from NATA Safety 1st. Additional announcements will be forthcoming in the NATA eNews, NATA Safety 1st eToolkit (SMS Ground), and eFlightbag (SMS Air Charter) newsletters. 

NATA and USAIG Develop Investigation Response Kit

NATA will soon release a new ready-made Safety Investigation Response Kit designed with USAIG specifically for FBOs. USAIG sponsored the initial kits for attendees of the Accident Update and NATA Safety 1st Management System Review session at the NATA Convention. Participants received their kits in June. Additional kits will be available for purchase by NATA members. Notices will go out in the NATA eNews, NATA Safety 1st eToolkit, and eFlightbag newsletters.

The Safety Investigation Response Kit comes in a preformed plastic case molded specially for

NATA Safety 1st. The kit includes paperwork for accident investigations, incident responses, utility location information, emergency contact information, and weather recording forms. Also included are a flashlight, compass, tape measure, pen, marking chalk, note pad, and disposable camera. The kits were designed to be quickly grabbed and taken to the investigation scene. 



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- United Energy Corporation**
 Loren Kopseng
 President
 919 S. 7th Street, Suite 405
 Bismarck, ND 58504
 701/255-7970
 fax: 701/222-4909
- Gadsden Airport Authority**
 Fred Sington
 Chairman
 PO Box 961
 Gadsden, AL 35902
 256/549-4646
 fax: 256/549-4678
 fsington@cityofgadsden.com
- Medallion Foundation, Inc.**
 Jerry Dennis
 Executive Director
 2301 Merrill Field Drive, Suite A-3
 Anchorage, AK 99501
 907/222-3210
 fax: 907/222-3206
 dawnrae@medallionfoundation.org
- Tri-Cities Airport Commission**
 Kathy Yakley
 Manager - HR/Administrative Services
 2525 Highway 75, Suite 102
 Blountville, TN 37617
 423/325-6003
 fax: 423/325-6041
 yakley@triflight.com
- AvBase SanJose, LLC**
 Brian Hart
 Aviation Director
 1144 Colman Avenue
 San Jose, CA 95110-1103
 817/624-1513
 fax: 817/624-7968
 bhart@keystoneftw.com
- Future of Flight Foundation**
 Melanie Jordan
 Board of Directors
 8415 Paine Field Blvd.
 Mukilteo, WA 98275
 425/349-3200
 fax: 425/349-1115
 melanie@futureofflight.org

Associate Members

- Flight Services & Systems Inc.**
 Robert Weitzel
 President
 6100 Riverside Woods Blvd., Ste. 355
 Cleveland, OH 44131
 216/328-0090
 fax: 216/328-0091
 bweitzel@fsspeople.com
- Galland, Kharasch, Greenberg**
 Keith Swirsky
 Attorney
 1054 Thirty-first St. N.W.
 Ste. 200
 Washington, DC 20007
 202/342-5251
 fax: 202/3425219
 kswirsky@gkglaw.com
- Shackelford, Melton & McKinley, LLP**
 David Norton
 Attorney at Law
 3333 Lee Parkway, Tenth Floor
 Dallas, TX 75219
 214/780-1407
 fax: 214/889-9707
 dnorton@shacklaw.net
- Strategic Alliances Resources Network, LLC**
 Paul Masson
 Managing Director
 870 Market Street, #758
 San Francisco, CA
 415/433-6412
 fax: 415/433-6419
 paul_masson@starnetic.net
- Transportation Safety Apparel**
 John Trimble
 President
 8 Bridgetown Road
 Hilton Head Island, SC 29928
 843/686-4046
 fax: 843/342-3906
 trimbleTSA@aol.com

Affiliate Members

- AvBase SanJose, LLC**
 Brian Hart
 Aviation Director
 1144 Colman Avenue
 San Jose, CA 95110-1103
 817/624-1513
 fax: 817/624-7968
 bhart@keystoneftw.com
- Future of Flight Foundation**
 Melanie Jordan
 Board of Directors
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Banyan Technicians Receive Awards

Banyan Air Service, located at Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport, hosted a celebration lunch for its avionics and maintenance technicians on May 24 in honor of Aviation Maintenance Technician Day. The date is recognized in 30 states in memory of Charles E. Taylor, the mechanic who built Orville and Wilbur Wright's engine.

"Today we honor the men and women who make up the nation's professional aviation maintenance workforce," said Banyan President Don Campion. "We recognize all aviation maintenance technicians for their dedication and crucial safety-of-flight accomplishments that have made air transportation safe and reliable."

Quality Assurance Manager Lou Homsher presented FAA AMT training awards to the maintenance technicians, and Avionics Chief Inspector Steve Ouellette presented the awards to the avionics technicians. A total of 36 FAA AMT awards were presented with several technicians having more than 100 hours of training.

"Quality is not something that can be imposed but must be built into a product or service from

the very beginning," Homsher said. "For us that beginning is the outstanding skill and dedication of our technicians."

In addition to the individual awards, Banyan received recognition for having 100 percent participation in the FAA AMT Awards program. 



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TAG Enters Asian Market

In January, TAG Aviation USA took a big step forward by officially opening its first charter sales and business development office in Asia. Under the name TAG Aviation Asia, the new operation is headquartered in Hong Kong.

"I believe there is enormous potential for TAG in Asia," said Paul Class, TAG Vice President, Flight Coordination and Charter Sales. "Early opportunities give us a great deal of confidence that we'll be successful in this market."

TAG Chief Financial Officer Dave Weil said, "In addition to adding Asian management clients and doing charters, our goal is to have this operation be an extension of our U.S.-based business, which serves clients who are doing a substantial amount of business in Asia and specifically China. We feel our ability to service our U.S. customers throughout the Asian region will be significantly enhanced through this new Hong Kong office." 



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These special members have made a commitment to help develop programs and initiatives throughout the year. This membership class includes participation, sponsorship and recognition in all major NATA events and publications.

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TAG Aviation

Founded in 1940, the National Air Transportation Association aggressively promotes aviation safety and the success of aviation service businesses through its advocacy efforts before government, the media and the public, and by providing valuable programs and forums to further its members' prosperity.



SevenBar

Continued from page 28

different philosophy than we do regarding how we are going to operate, how safety is a priority. The commitment in the air medical business is so high that we're basically with that customer 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We're living together. We want to make sure that their culture is similar to ours. We've been very lucky that we've been able to adapt to

them, and them to us, well."

"Some things will never change," Koch concluded, "like the demand and appreciation for exceptional service. That's why we were early adopters for the Safety 1st management system for FBOs and now SMS for air charter. We are always going to adopt the highest standards in the industry, but on top of all those most-haves, you have to have the people. We have the

bench strength to be able to grow and develop in the same style in more locations, if it's managed growth."

"Seven is a lucky number," Black said, "which is why my grandfather picked it for the name of his ranch." SevenBar seems to have had its share of luck over the years, and it seems that a little of that luck rubbed off on little Ignacio on his flight into Dallas, as he's doing just fine after surgery.



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