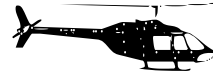


# Flight Lines



FIRST EDITION

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## Safety and Training Seminar

The safety and training seminar in Manatee County June 8 was an unqualified success. Director Mark Latham had a very nice set-up for us in Manatee County MCD's board room, lots of coffee and amenities, and we started off the day with doughnuts, then graduated to sub sandwiches for lunch. In addition to Art Shiver from Manatee, Luis Sanchez and Wayne Web came down from Citrus County, Wayne Daniels from Pasco, Mike Muench and I from Hillsborough, and Amy Sargent and Rex Hopkins flew up from the Keys in an Islander.

Mike Muench led off with a review of the Bell 206, discussing the aircraft powerplant, flight controls, lubricating and hydraulic systems, operating limitations and restrictions, emergency procedures, preflight and normal operating procedures. His extensive experience with flying and maintaining this aircraft was helpful in fielding technical questions and providing insight into particular design features, as well as pointing out important items to check during preflight inspections which are not commonly considered.

Mike also presented a video he made back in 1991 when he was doing mosquito control in New Jersey, outlining the development of a special closed system he had designed to expedite the loading of Temephos (Abate) granules internally into their Jet Ranger. Although most enjoyed the video for its historical value, Wayne Daniels was especially intrigued, commenting that it was similar to the loading system they had been building in Pasco County which has been stalled for some time. I could see the wheels turning; I have a feeling we will see Pasco's pesticide loader project moved to a front burner in the near future.

The next presentation was a Night Vision Goggle (NVG) ground-school course given by me, which covered preflight inspection, use and adjustment of the goggles (I brought two pair with me to play with), as well as subjects pertinent to all night flying such as dark adaptation and night vision, blind spots, night visual illusions, visual cues to depth perception and terrain interpretation, and the importance of practicing and following a standardized inadvertent-IMC procedure. A lively discussion ensued about the legal implications of flying with NVGs, since the FARs do not as yet

address them. I relayed a discussion I had with Paul Kahler, our local FAA guy, wherein he told me that the FAA had decided to classify NVGs as an "appliance" similar to a radio or weather radar, and handed out copies of their proposed regulation for Part 135 operators (particularly air ambulance) using NVGs. I explained that Kahler, as the first FAA Inspector to get NVG qualified, will be very involved in establishing any regulations pertaining to the goggles including eventually those applicable to Part 137, Agricultural Aircraft Operations, and that it would be to our advantage to provide him with an organizational SOP for mosquito control operations using NVGs. By outlining for the FAA our specific procedures for usage of NVGs in advance of any regulation, we may be able to head off any overly restrictive regulations from being applied to us in the future. It was agreed that this was a wise move, and that will be one of our first projects as an organization.

Another topic of discussion pertaining to NVGs was the requirement for inspection and calibration of the equipment. Currently, goggle manufacturers are telling us that we have to have them inspected and calibrated every six months, which costs us at Hillsborough County nearly \$2,000 per year for two sets of goggles (\$250 each for the inspection, and \$450 for shipping with \$20,000 worth of insurance), not to mention the inconvenience of having to package them up and ship them off, and get a purchase order for the process. I handed out



*Manatee County Mosquito Control hosted the first ever FMCPA Safety and Training Seminar.*

copies of the FAA's new Technical Standard Order which states that NVGs must meet the minimum performance standards outlined in RTCA/DO-275, a rather lengthy document which also specifies procedures for maintaining the goggles in "airworthy" condition. I have ordered this document and intend to use it to establish our own in-house inspection procedures. Luis Sanchez, who once conducted NVG inspections during his army career, suggested that we seek assistance from a local National Guard aviation unit in establishing a similar inspection program. He said he thought the particular piece of equipment needed would cost around \$700, and suggested that, if absolutely necessary, it might be worthwhile to find a way to send one or two of us to the army's Aviation Life Support Equipment (ALSE) maintainer course.

We all agreed that even though at this time, flying "government" or "public" aircraft we were not strictly required to have the goggles inspected, the ramifications of flying with something that was not "airworthy" were unclear and it would be preferable to have some sort of inspection program in place. This is another project we will take on as a group.

The discussion of FAA regulations segued nicely into the next presentation, given by Luis Sanchez: FAR part 137, Agricultural Aircraft Operations, and how it applies to us as "government aircraft."

This was a very relevant topic, since most mosquito control organizations operate under the umbrella of "government" or "public" aircraft. One of the first paragraphs of the 137 regulation states that "public aircraft need not comply with this subpart." Many operators mistakenly believe that this means that part 137 does not apply to them at all, and this is a dangerous mistake. It was pointed out that "subpart" refers to "Subpart B" which simply outlines the requirements and procedures for obtaining a part 137 operating certificate, and that the rest of the "Part," **does** apply to anyone conducting aerial agricultural operations, specifically defined as aerial application of pesticides.

For purposes of regulation, the FAA recognizes two categories of aircraft operations, "civil" and "public." It should be noted that it is the *type of operation* being conducted with the aircraft that determines the category, not the aircraft itself. Operating as "public aircraft" exempts the operator from any FARs which specify "civil aircraft," but *not* those which make no distinction, including those which specify minimum safe altitudes. It was pointed out therefore, that operating as "public" aircraft does not give anyone license to fly at altitudes of 200 to 300 feet AGL

spraying pesticides. It is only Part 137 which allows us to fly lower than the minimum altitudes prescribed for flight, and further delineates when and where we may do so.

The question brought up was -- is there any benefit to obtaining a part 137 operating certificate? Even though we in Hillsborough County have a 137 certificate, we generally operate as "public aircraft." The only time we would actually use our certificate is if we were to go spray in another county. Public aircraft are not allowed to receive reimbursement, and the regulation specifies that even though no profit is made, any sort of reimbursement (at all) for expenses or whatever constitutes "commercial purposes" and nullifies the public aircraft exemption. In a discussion I had with Paul Kahler recently he confirmed as much to me, and warned that not only the organization but the pilot violating this regulation would face "severe civil penalties."

The conclusions drawn from this discussion were that 1) all of us need to review part 137 and be sure we understand precisely which paragraphs apply to our operation, and 2) before conducting any type of reciprocal operation in another county, pilots not working under an Agricultural Operators Certificate need to carefully examine the agreement, and if possible clear it through their local FAA inspector. I recommend going to the FAA website ([www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov)), clicking on *regulations*, then *advisory circulars*, and downloading AC 137-1 and AC 00-1.1, the latter of which very clearly explains what does and does not constitute a "public aircraft" operation.

The final presentation of the day was a review of the destruction caused by Hurricanes Charlie and Katrina, with an emphasis on the need for aircraft evacuation plans and post-hurricane plans. I discussed my recent revision to our hurricane evacuation plan to include a post-hurricane operation plan, recognizing the anticipated need for continuous operation of the helicopter after a major disaster, and the logistical requirements that would entail. Although we always top off our 2,000 gallon jet fuel tank before a hurricane, if a major storm hits Tampa I'm not sure that tank will be there anymore. So while I'm cooling my heels in a hotel room watching the storm on the weather channel from someplace else, I plan to use my laptop to surf all the local airports and figure out who's going to have gas available after the storm. Then when I get back we'll use our two nurse trucks to service the helicopter. I figure each 100-gallon jet fuel tank ought to be good for about four hours flight time, which is hopefully enough time for the other truck to

drive to the nearest facility and fill up. Mike and I had already agreed that we would probably be flying shifts and sleeping on cots for the first few days or even weeks after a major disaster, but I forgot about making sure we will be assigned some ground personnel to drive the nurse trucks. We're not that large of an operation, and that's going to be a pretty good chunk of our available personnel.

In discussing aircraft evacuation, I realized there is a need to identify good places to stash aircraft. When I evacuated our King Air for hurricane Charlie, I had the good fortune to find an FBO with plenty of hangar space at Witham Field in Stuart. Since hurricanes can be so unpredictable, you really don't want to evacuate someplace and then just leave the aircraft on the ramp. I would like to see us put together a list of good places to go. If everybody can just send me information for their area, we would have the whole state covered. I need to know if you have hangar space, and if so, how much, and the names and phone numbers of local FBOs who might have some space available. (If their hangar's always crammed full of aircraft, don't bother.) I'll compile the info and send it out to everybody.

The open discussion scheduled for last actually started at the first break, and continued throughout the day during lunch and every other break or lull in the program. We talked about the Wingman navigation system, benefits, glitches and fixes operators had found, methods of loading pesticide, special loaders that had been designed, congested area plans and how they differed from one organization to the next, the volatility of FAA inspectors and how best to cover our assets, and a variety of other subjects too numerous to mention.

Mark Latham suggested that rather than going through the difficulties of creating a formal organization at this time, we keep the FMCPA as an informal affiliation, and that I join the FMCA Aerial Subcommittee in order to represent pilot needs and concerns. Myself, I'm thinking that pilots are kinda naturally lazy individuals, (we have to conserve our energy for those "moments of sheer terror"\*) and I really don't foresee anybody jumping up and volunteering to write some bylaws or serve on a board or anything, so I'm inclined to go along with the suggestion. I really don't want to get involved in collecting dues or anything like that either.

It was agreed that we would like to meet three times per year; on one coast in the spring, the other in the fall, (this fall will be Jacksonville) and for the third time during the aerial short course in Lee County in January. The new format for the short course introduced this past year was well-received

and will be repeated in 2007, with separate forums for pilots and administrators on the last day. Only WE will get to determine and develop the program for the pilot forum.

More good information Mark provided, for those MCDs who are having trouble getting accident insurance, is a policy they were able to get through AIG, and he provided copies of the policy for everybody attending. It looks to me like a pretty good deal, so if you're in the market I suggest you contact AIG Life Insurance Company at (302) 594-2000 and ask them about it.

All in all it was a really good seminar. I hope I've managed to convey the meat of the discussion. If anybody would like to have a copy of the NVG or the Bell 206 refresher ground school, shoot me an e-mail and I'll send you a CD. They're PowerPoint presentations with a word document containing information that goes with each slide.

Now you know as much as I do. Except you don't get the CEUs - you have to actually show up for those. I hope to see you at the next one!

*\*"Flying is hours and hours of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror."*

Next Seminar: Jacksonville Mosquito Control in September/October. Drop us a line if you can attend, and let us know what dates are good for you!

## Crash Landing in Tampa

Pilots Steve Huisman, of Bradenton, and Sean Launder, of Sarasota, lost control of their King Air C90 while attempting to land at Peter O'Knight Airport in Tampa, Florida Monday afternoon with an in-flight mechanical problem. The airplane skidded off the runway and crashed into a house at the north end of the field, bursting into flames. Steve was killed, and Sean was taken to Tampa General with severe burns and other injuries. Both pilots worked for Dynamic Aviation in support of the FDACS Medfly Program.

Steve leaves behind his wife, Sonya, and four small children. If anyone has news of who might be taking up a collection for the families, or where to send card and flowers, please let me know and I will send that information out immediately. I'm sorry to end this first newsletter on such a sad note, but we all know this job is dangerous.

**Pam**