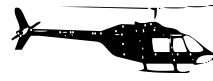


Flight Lines



TENTH EDITION

NOVEMBER 2008

Special Risk Legislation Update

On Sunday, November 16, I attended the FMCA Board of Directors' Meeting in Panama City to ask them to once again sponsor legislation to get the mosquito control pilots into the Special Risk class for retirement under the Florida Retirement System (FRS). While they all agreed that this was worthy legislation and that something needed to be done to remedy the situation, they felt, regrettably, that this was not a good investment for the legislative funds. This is something that the Association has been attempting for a good 20 years, possibly longer, and despite a tremendous show of support during the most recent attempt in 2007, there was very little progress. It was pointed out that not all member organizations in the Association had aerial programs, and therefore were not represented in this legislative effort.

So what now? There has been a good deal of interest expressed to me by some Directors and Commissioners from some of the districts in finding a way to supplement the pilots' retirement in a way that is similar to what would be provided through the Special Risk classification. Collier County MCD has, in fact, had such a program in place for some time.

Basically, an employer contributes an amount equal to 9.55%* of the employee's salary to the FRS, for every employee under the Regular Class. For those classified as "Special Risk," that amount is 21.96%*. Collier County MCD has set up a special 401-A plan for each of their pilots, to which

they contribute the difference between Regular and Special Risk class employees. It is strictly a retirement plan, and the pilots can decide on how they want to invest the money, but cannot take it out until they retire.

Unfortunately, this does not allow a pilot to retire with 25 years of service vs. 30, or at age 55 instead of 62, which is the whole point of the Special Risk class, but it could definitely help, especially if a pilot gets disabled and has no choice but to retire early. It's certainly very generous and proactive of Collier County MCD's leadership to have established this program, especially considering the technical hurdles they no doubt had to overcome to work it out.

Frank Van Essen, Collier's Director and President of FMCA (actually at this last meeting he passed the baton to Dennis Moore, and is now the "Immediate Past President"), has graciously agreed to outline the process for other mosquito districts to follow suit.

I talked the situation over with Mike Higgins from Manatee County MCD and considering the gloomy state of affairs at the State Legislature this upcoming session we agreed that this was not the best time to pursue such legislation, and that our efforts would be better directed toward encouraging districts to emulate what Collier County MCD has worked out. In a year or two, when things are (hopefully) not so dismal, we can pursue the legislation again, and if we can point to a number of districts who are already voluntarily making the contributions, it will give us that much stronger a case.

Additionally, I would like to thank the 24 respondents who got back to me by e-mail

with their current age and the age at which they started as mosquito control pilots. It goes to show that not only do we have an aging population of pilots (average age 47) but proves our point that mosquito control pilots tend to get a late start in their career field due to the rigorous flying hour requirements. The average starting age came out to 36. To put in a full 30 years with an organization, that person would retire at 66. We all age differently, and because of the need for sharp reflexes and impeccable infallibility in our profession, some of us might need to retire earlier than that. Personally, I would not want to have a pilot working for me that was starting to feel that he or she was losing their edge but could not afford to retire. Pilots, like firefighters, law enforcement officers and other emergency personnel should be given the option to step down at age 55, should they feel it's in their (and the community's) best interest. Leon County Sheriff Lee Majors says that the mosquito control flying he does is way more risky than anything he does as a law enforcement pilot. This is the point we will continue to make, and if you haven't sent me your info, please do. We are just getting started on this.

*2007 figures

FMCA 2008 Meeting Highlights

This year's FMCA Fall Meeting was held at the Bay Point Marriott Resort in Panama City, Florida from November 16 – 19. It was quite a chilly weekend (okay freezing), but I don't really attend these things for the venue, so I spent most of my time indoors attending meetings and didn't really no-

tice the weather, except when I had to scurry between buildings to get to my room.

I sat in on the Board of Director's Meeting Sunday afternoon, and was turned down on sponsorship of our Special Risk legislation, which wasn't much of a surprise. Then I left them to what turned out to be a very long and grueling meeting, and moved to the meeting of the Aerial Subcommittee.

One of the subjects of that meeting was the catalogue that Dr. Jane Barber – now Bonds, Jane Bonds – is trying to compile on aerial ULV equipment and aircraft in the United States. It's a huge undertaking and her efforts have been somewhat stymied by a lack of response from the districts with aircraft. I mentioned the upcoming Aviation Symposium at the AMCA meeting in New Orleans, and we agreed that would be a good opportunity to make some contacts with aerial programs from around the country. Aside from our directory, there really is no listing anywhere of mosquito control programs with aerial assets nationwide.

We discussed the new labeling, particularly the new Dibrom label, and some of the problems with it. Of particular concern was the statement that "Directions from the equipment manufacturer or vendor, pesticide registrant, or a test facility using a wind tunnel and laser-based measurement instrument must be used to adjust equipment to produce acceptable droplet size spectra" did not allow for using spinners and slides to determine that the equipment was producing the correct size droplets. It was pointed out that the graphs provided by Micronair for adjustment of their atomizers only give a rough estimate, as those figures were derived by applications of water, and that each chemical will have different results. Since the atomi-

zers have not been tested with Dibrom in a wind tunnel, then according to the label they are not acceptable... I'm still working on digging up a bit more information on this one.

Another problem with the new Dibrom label is the wording that "Mixers, loaders, applicators and handlers must wear: Protective eye wear (goggles, face shield or safety glasses)." The rest of the PPE listed is either something we would wear anyway (I don't think anybody is flying in shorts and flip flops) or doesn't apply, but the eye wear part is a bit of a sticky wicket. Further on down the label it reaffirms "Applicators must: Use an enclosed cab/cockpit and must wear the PPE required in the PPE section of this labeling for applicators."

I asked Peter Connolly, from AmVac, about this, and he replies: "It's inappropriate for any registrant to interpret a label for an enduser. However, I do believe that we can speak to the intent of the statements on the label. In the Mixers, Loaders and Applicators section of the label when the label speaks to protective eyewear for the applicators, the intent is to prevent a "splash" of material reaching the pilot's eyes. "

I don't know about intent, but the label language sounds pretty specific to me. I wonder if Night Vision Goggles qualify as protective eye wear...

One presentation I found particularly interesting during the regular session was one given Tuesday morning by Kay Gaines of Anastasia Mosquito Control District. They implemented a fledgling aerial program this last year, focusing on aggressive larviciding in their salt marsh areas and one inland fresh water habitat, and measured the difference in citizen complaints, trap counts and landing rate counts received after 15+ inches of rainfall during previous years against their first year with the heli-

copter. The results were quite impressive; as much as 60-80% decline in various areas, particularly around their salt marshes. I know that when our helicopter goes into maintenance during the busy season our phone calls and trap counts pick up tremendously, but I don't think I've ever seen anybody actually make this kind of measurement. I would like to see more of this kind of documentation on the benefits of an effective aerial program.

Another interesting presentation was about a real-time Doppler radar-based rainfall observation and analysis system developed for Indian River MCD. They used a Precipitation Analysis Tool which can be downloaded from the National Weather Service website for use with ESRI ARC GIS 9.3 to give real-time rainfall observations. I haven't checked it out yet so I don't know how it compares with Weather Underground, which gives a pictorial summary of the previous four hours' rainfall.

Turnout for the Pilot's meeting was light, as predicted. Amy Sargent and Rex Hopkins flew up from the Keys in the Turbine Islanders; brought a commissioner or two to the FMCA meeting and stayed for the whole three days. Brad Gunn from Beach Mosquito Control was able to attend, and gave an excellent presentation on their newest venture: spraying for dog flies. Honestly, I didn't even know what a dog fly was; I kept hearing about DACs' dog fly plane, but I was thinking they were some kind of sand fleas or no-see-ums or something. Seems there are some big nasty biting flies that pass through the area on a seasonal basis and drive away (carry away?) the tourists. It was quite an interesting presentation and I'm hoping he'll give it again at the AMCA meeting in New Orleans. They had a lot of unusual problems to overcome with this one. Anyway, to continue, Lee Majors, our six-million-dollar sheriff/mosquito control pilot

attended the pilot's meeting, and Scott Lunsford of Lunsford Air Consulting gave a really good talk about obstacle avoidance and low-level hazards to flight. Peter Connelly from AmVac was there for a bit to answer questions about the Dibrom label, but he had to leave before we could get to him because he was chosen to be an Industry Representative on the Board of Directors and had to attend the post-meeting Board Meeting. Candace Royals from Valent Bio Sciences also sat in on the meeting; she's just had her first official flying lesson and was quite interested in all things aerial.

Thanks again to Dr. John Smith for letting us use the PHEREC conference room at the facility there by the airport, and the welcoming remarks to open the meeting.

***Birds that don't fly end up on the dinner table!
Exercise your aircraft by bringing it to the
AMCA Equipment Display at Slidell Airport!***

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Thanksgiving

AMCA Abstract Deadline

The deadline for submitting an abstract to give a presentation at the AMCA meeting in New Orleans this April is December 1st! No exceptions. It's not too late – go to www.mosquito.org, click on meetings, the Spring meeting, Call for Papers, and follow the directions. It's not rocket science, honestly.

The Aviation Symposium will consist of two sessions: One for Overviews of Aerial Programs, and one for Pilot Safety and Training related issues. The first one is for anyone with an aerial program that is willing to share their techniques, problems, equipment, products, whatever, and the second one is an "Invited Speaker" symposium. E-mail me between now and Monday's deadline (5:30 p.m.) at my work e-mail jacobsonp@hillsboroughcounty.org or my home e-mail Pamela976@aol.com or my FMCPA e-mail Pamelafmcpa@aol.com and I will be happy (ecstatic, really) to add you to the program. Writing an abstract is easy, really! I'll even do it for you. Then you have FOUR MONTHS to put together your presentation. You can do it! This is a unique opportunity to showcase your program, talk about pilot issues, and find out how everybody else is doing it. It's unprecedented, really. Talk to your Directors TODAY. New Orleans is not much further than Panama City, and an investment in education is always a sound one!

Pamela

