

Angle of Attack

Taking Back Control

Loss of Control Workgroup Focused on Tangible Solutions

As you may have noticed elsewhere in this issue, there is a definite focus on one of the leading causes of general aviation (GA) accidents: loss of control (LOC). In just the last decade, LOC has accounted for more than 1,100 GA accidents. That's according to a study done by the General Aviation Joint Steering Committee (GAJSC) and the Safety Assessment Team (SAT), both mechanisms for government/industry cooperation, communication and coordination on GA safety issues. Based on its findings, the GAJSC/SAT formed a special LOC workgroup dedicated to researching, analyzing—and most importantly—developing solutions for this leading culprit of accidents. And after a year of intense focus, the workgroup is beginning to see the fruit of its labor.

The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the Commercial Aviation Safety Team (CAST) define LOC as loss of aircraft control or a deviation from an intended flightpath while inflight. In his article “Pilot-In-Control” on page 10, author Rich Stowell further explains that LOC accidents result from situations in which the pilot should have either maintained or regained control of the aircraft, but did not. Understanding what leads to and ultimately causes the misapplication of the controls in these accidents has been the unwavering goal of the LOC workgroup from its onset.

Beginning with those LOC accidents that occurred during the approach and landing phase of flight, the LOC workgroup focused on a set of 90 fatal accidents that were selected using a customized random sampling methodology. The 90 accidents were divided equally among three categories: amateur-built, turbine, and reciprocating non-amateur-built. A mix of industry and government experts analyzed each of these accidents in detail, following the same root-cause analysis methodology used to successfully reduce the commercial accident rate in recent years—the CAST model.

“The CAST model provides us greater detail and allows us to cull more pertinent information during our analyses,” says National FAA Team Operations

Lead Kevin Clover, who, along with David Oord of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA), is co-chair of the LOC workgroup. “From these results, we can more accurately determine the contributing factors, then establish a set of intervention strategies to mitigate the underlying problem,” says Clover.

The LOC workgroup is currently working towards condensing the various intervention strategies it has developed into more specific categories, such as Aeronautical Decision Making or transitioning to a different aircraft. Using the CAST model, those strategies will then be scored on how attainable and effective they are. Once finalized, the strategies will be

sent to the GAJSC as part of a report expected this June. Leveraging its organizational resources both in industry and government, the GAJSC will then decide how to begin implementing the strategies.

“Outcomes for these strategies will likely evolve into aviation technology changes and/or enhancements,” says Clover. “Other strategies will focus on enhanced training and educational outreach and will involve a greater working relationship with the FAA Safety Team.”

Stay tuned for more information on new GA accident mitigation strategies in future issues.



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