



AIRCRAFT MECHANICS FRATERNAL ASSOCIATION

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Report of the AEI Secretary of the Americas 2nd Quarter 2014

I attended the 2014 FAA/EASA Safety Conference on June 17-19, 2014, on behalf of the Aircraft Engineers International (AEI) and the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA).

After working my regular shift in Seattle, WA on June 16, the night before the conference, I travelled to Washington, DC. I took the Metrorail train from the airport to an inexpensive motel several exits away from the Bethesda Hyatt. The following morning I began my daily trek from the motel to the conference via the Metrorail. The conference began with an introduction and plenary session titled "Beyond the Bi-lateral Agreement- Collaborative Approaches to Aviation Safety" moderated by Margaret "Peggy" Gillian, FAA Associate Administrator for Aviation Safety. The following is a list of the various plenary and breakout sessions, which were run two at a time:

- Harmonization of Advanced Technologies and Procedures for NextGen
- The Safety Continuum/Enhancing the Public/Private Safety Partnership
- Delivering the Safety Benefits of Required Navigation Performance
- ICAO State Responsibilities and the Challenge of Diversity among Regulators
- Challenges and Opportunities in Pilot Training
- Challenges and Opportunities in Airworthiness Certification
- Globalization of Aviation Operations
- Bilateral Agreements for Airworthiness - What's Working and Where We Can Do Better?
- Rulemaking Cooperation and Harmonization
- Annex 2 of the US/EU Safety Agreement: Updates to the Maintenance Annex Guidance and What to Expect in Sampling Inspections
- Challenges Posed by the Intersection of Safety and Environmental Issues
- Unmanned Aircraft Systems
- Safety Oversight: Are we Using Effective and Efficient Systematic Risk Based Approaches?
- Data Sharing Across Borders – What are the Opportunities?

At first glance, one would think that aircraft maintenance would be discussed in many of these topics, but to my surprise, that was not the case. Though the focus of the topics ranged from manufacturing, certification, flight crews, and flight operations, maintenance was hardly mentioned. I was disappointed by the lack of focus on aircraft maintenance safety, but tried at every opportunity to make our voice heard. During one breakout session I caught an FAA attorney suggesting that it was acceptable to ignore certain regulations when they're covered by

both FAA and EASA regulations simultaneously. When I questioned him regarding compliance violations and a possible certificate action, he back pedaled trying to explain without contradicting himself, he failed.

Throughout the conference I carried several common messages and tried to insert them into any comments or conversations that were appropriate. They were as follows:

In all other areas of our business we demand a level of education, experience, and integrity which is greater than what is necessary to perform the tasks of that job. An unlicensed, uncertified, inexperienced Maintenance Engineer/Technician or one which is allowed to skirt the educational requirements is a serious threat to aviation safety. A system that embraces the unskilled and inexperienced is only embracing the ability to manipulate those that lack the ethics, fortitude, or skill to compromise safety for financial gain. Ethics and integrity are the core of our craft.

When the certification of maintenance personnel is controlled by private companies, it removes the ability for that individual to be objective, to stand his/her ground, to evaluate strictly on the basis of condition and regulation. His/her certification and employment are now at risk by exercising the most fundamental authority of that very certification.

The primary topic of the conference was certainly Safety Management Systems (SMS) and their implementation. SMS is a complex organizational safety system, adopted from industry, designed to establish, measure, and monitor acceptable levels of risk by analyzing internal statistical data, and making changes when certain thresholds, good or bad, are exceeded. The system is set to allow regulators to perform fewer audits and instead simply review the results of company provided audits. This passive approach to safety allows companies to police themselves, and all but eliminates the tried and true system of checks and balances. This will also allow for a smaller number of regulatory inspection staff. It's very concerning how willing the regulators are to embrace such a concept while scrapping the system of oversight, checks, and balances that have proven to be so effective, provided standards are maintained

While this conference left me very concerned, it has encouraged me to be more vocal and proactive. Many of us are used to being the person behind the scenes, the one that passengers rarely see. We must break from this, stand strong, and voice our concern for the future of Aviation safety. I have followed up this conference with comments to the FAA and EASA voicing my concern about the lack of topics and discussion related to aviation maintenance.

AEI Executive Board (EB) Meeting

I'm proud to report that I attended the AEI Executive Board (EB) Meeting on June 25th in Nieuw-Vennep, Netherlands. This is the first time that an AMFA representative has attended an EB meeting in person. I flew standby from Seattle to Amsterdam where I took the train to the small town of Nieuw-Vennep.

We discussed the continuing effort to compare the FAR to EASA regulations with some follow-up required between myself and another EB member. We continued by discussing how delays, manpower, and shortcuts adversely affect our groups and what we can do to get the word out and try to effect some change. We then went on to discuss various tasks that each of us could accomplish prior to the congress in November. We were then joined by our affiliates from

Australia and France via skype, and then moved on to discuss a pending Ombudsman ruling having to do with a European freedom of information request. We ended the meeting with a good discussion about issues with an overseas heavy maintenance repair station, what information we had on the issue to date, and strategies going forward.

The meeting lasted approximately 10 hours and, though tiring with the flight schedule and time change, it was well worth the endeavor. I ended my trip by getting bumped off of several flights heading back to Seattle, but made it on the following morning after spending the night in the terminal.

Many thanks to AEI President Robert Alway, Vice President Ola Blomqvist, and AEI Secretary General Fred Bruggemen for their professionalism and hospitality.

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