



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

**East Michigan
Flight Standards District Office**

Willow Run Airport – East Side

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To: East Michigan FSDO Area Aviators and Maintainers

Subject: 2011 Michigan General Aviation Accident Rate

So far 2011 has been a particularly bad year for general aviation accidents in Michigan. To date there has been 28 accidents in the state, 10 of the accidents have been fatal resulting in 15 fatalities. We have also had a number of ground maneuvering incidents that occurred but were not “technically” reportable.

While reviewing the accident data and NTSB probable causes, there seems to be a common connection in 92% of the accidents...the human element. Below are a few the NTSB probable causes from accidents that occurred in Michigan in 2010 and 2011.

- Pilot's loss of directional control during takeoff.
- Pilot's inadequate compensation for wind conditions.
- Flight instructor's failure to maintain an appropriate glide path and airspeed.
- Pilot's decision to take off in known instrument meteorological conditions without instrument currency or recent instrument experience.
- Inadequate maintenance of the airplane brakes by maintenance personnel.
- Pilot's failure to use carburetor heat.
- Inadequate annual maintenance inspection.
- Improper torque of the number one cylinder's spark plug as a result of inadequate maintenance.
- Mechanic's use of incorrect hardware.
- Flight instructor's delayed remedial action.
- Pilot's improper fuel planning.
- Pilot's limited experience in the make and model airplane.

While discussing the accidents and causes with FSDO management, inspectors and our FAAS Team managers we have become frustrated and concerned with the number of “human error” accidents and incidents that have been occurring, especially with the ones relating to a loss of directional control on the ground and inadequate or improper maintenance and inspections.

We need your help in lowering the number of accidents and incidents; just how we are going to accomplish this is an answer we are still searching for. In the mean time we challenge you to take a look at how you are flying or performing maintenance.

- Are you using the checklist or manual or just doing things from memory?

- Are you sure the checklist or manual is current and applicable?
- Was your last flight review challenging or was it the same old thing to get the signature?
- When was the last time you attended a safety seminar or had some recurrent training?
- When was the last time you performed that particular maintenance task or worked on that model of aircraft or engine?
- Did you really understand the requirements of the AD?
- When was the last time you landed at an unfamiliar airport in a crosswind or at night?
- When was the last time you flew that model of aircraft or flew one with that kind of equipment?
- Are you sure the fuel source is good, did you drain the sumps and gascolator?
- When was the last time your torque wrench was calibrated or has it been dropped or damaged since the last time it was calibrated?
- Flight Instructors – Are you teaching the minimum requirements, are you just doing what is required so you can check the box?

In the near future you will start seeing FAA inspectors out at the airports in the evenings and on weekends. They won't just be there to look for things that are wrong; they will be there to observe, whether it is on the runway, taxiway, ramp, or in the hangar. They will also be there to answer questions, listen to concerns you might have about particular issues at your or other airports, mechanics, flight instructors or your peers. Our goal is to increase our presence at the grass roots airports and get people to start thinking about and doing things right and doing things safely.

If you have any recommendations on how to improve our safety record in the state, would like an FAA inspector to do a presentation at a meeting, or voice any comments or concerns either send me an email or give me a call. richard.d.anderson-jr@faa.gov or 734-487-7285.

Sincerely,



Rick Anderson
Supervisory Inspector
GA Airworthiness