

Log 1681

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: May 4, 1984

Forwarded to:

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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-84-51

Concerned about the continuing problem of alcohol involvement in transportation, the National Transportation Safety Board has undertaken activities in this area in relation to the highway, marine, rail, and aviation modes. To gain more information about the role which alcohol may play in aviation accidents, the Safety Board analyzed aviation accidents involving alcohol that occurred during the period 1975 through 1981 and prepared a Safety Study report on its findings. ^{1/} For the purpose of this report, an "alcohol-involved accident" is one in which alcohol was cited by the Safety Board as a cause or factor; one in which toxicological tests of the pilot for alcohol were positive, even at a low level; or one in which witnesses established that alcohol had been used. It is the position of the Safety Board that the presence of any alcohol in a pilot's blood jeopardizes safety and is, therefore, unacceptable.

In 1963, the Safety Board began a systematic effort to determine and record the BAC of fatally injured pilots. In 1967, 74 percent of the fatally injured pilots were tested for alcohol and 24 percent of those tests were alcohol-positive. During mid-70's, toxicological tests were performed in about 70 percent of fatal accidents, as they are today; but the percentage of tests which were positive had decreased to about 10 percent. This percentage has remained relatively constant through 1981.

^{1/} For more information read, Safety Study: "Statistical Review of Alcohol-Involved Aviation Accidents, 1975-1981" (NTSB/SS-84/03).

In the Safety Board's recently completed study, positive test results were found among pilots of all ages and all certification levels who were involved in fatal accidents. Even pilots with high numbers of flight-hours had positive tests for alcohol, indicating that experience cannot compensate for the effects of alcohol. It also indicates that some pilots do not take the prohibitions against mixing alcohol and flying seriously, and that they may not understand the consequences of ignoring these prohibitions.

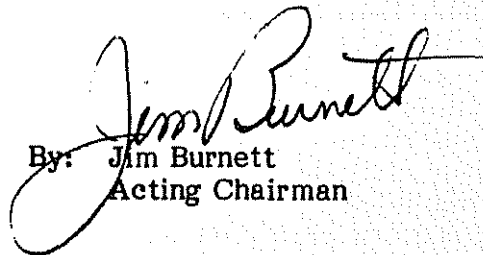
Twelve percent of the pilots in the alcohol-involved accidents reviewed by the Safety Board had no valid medical certificate--which could indicate that these persons either did not fear enforcement action or did not believe enforcement action was likely. Some of the pilots, of course, may have been concerned that a medical certificate would be denied on application.

In order to reduce the use of alcohol by pilots, it will be necessary to approach the problem from more than one standpoint. A greater awareness by pilots of the dangers concomitant to the use of alcohol may increase self-enforcement of the alcohol rules. Aviation community groups can assist efforts in this regard. Increased emphasis can also be placed in this area by flight instructors during initial and recurrent training.

Based on the findings of this study, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Agricultural Aviation Association, the National Association of Flight Instructors, and the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association:

Disseminate to its members through articles in periodicals, seminars, workshops, and other avenues, information on the dangers of alcohol use in connection with flying. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-84-51)

BURNETT, Acting Chairman, GOLDMAN, BURSLEY, and GROSE, Members, concurred in this recommendation.


By: Jim Burnett
Acting Chairman