Preventing Runway Incursions – a Completed Renewed EU Action Plan

On 1 May, EUROCONTROL published the revised version of its European Action Plan for the Prevention of Runway Incursions, the so-called “EAPPRI 2.0”. It makes important recommendations to help reduce runway incursions in Europe – a figure that has been increasing. Having been closely involved in the drafting of this document ECA calls on pilots to take note and contribute to make runways a safer place.

Questionnaire to Pilots
To make things more concrete, a few questions for pilots. Would you:

1. taxi out, without knowing the relevant airport specific, having planned the ground operations, with or without an airport chart or with a crew not trained or familiar with the aerodrome signage?

2. allow crew to cross red lights, cross a runway without clearance or enter the runway when not ready for take off or take-off or land without being sure that clearance has been received?

3. continue taxiing when performance has to be calculated, when aircraft checks still have to be performed, when airport charts have to be found, when not completely sure on the taxi clearance or when a communication breakdown has occurred, in order to save time and money?

4. accept or request an intersection take off when checks or performance calculations are still to be made, accept a rapid EXIT taxiway for departure while taxiing or accept that only one pilot is concentrating on taxiing while the other one(s) are doing something totally different e.g. public address, checks and/or performance?

5. not inform ATC when not sure of position or when more time is needed on the runway?

By Capt. Rob van Eekeren

Please do not hesitate to contact ECA for any clarification or input you might have.

For the action plan see: http://www.eurocontrol.int/runwaysafety/

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Is Aviation more Secure now?

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ince 1999 I have been involved in aviation security and since that time one of the names of the most wanted terrorists has been Osama Bin Laden. After the terrible attacks of 11 September 2001, he and his network have attracted not only the attention of the world’s intelligence services, but also of aviation security experts around the globe.

When I remember how the aviation world was before 9/11 we have seen many significant changes. Just to mention some: reinforced cockpit doors, in-flight security officers, body scanners, liquid scanners, passenger behaviour recognition, etc. – all designed to protect the aviation sector and the travelling public from terrorist attacks. Now that Osama Bin Laden is dead, does it mean we will not need them anymore? Is the aviation more secure now and can we go back to a “normal” situation?

Unfortunately not. Many terrorist groups in the world, related to or inspired by Al Qaeda still see transport networks – and in particular aviation – as the main target to cause maximum harm and generate maximum attention. Since 9/11, the world has irreversibly changed, so we have to remain vigilant and continue to protect ourselves against terrorism.

Another thing that strikes me as strange is that in aviation security we seem to strive for 100% security. No security-related incidents or accidents are allowed and no one should die because of any. How different this is in aviation safety. Here it looks as if we can accept a certain amount of incidents or accidents. The problem is that we observe that safety margins are stretched further and further – all too often apparently based on the commercial interest of the airlines or other industry players.

An example of this is pilot training, where...
Pilots: Flight Managers or Aviators?

So, what is the answer to the key question if a pilot is a manager or an aviator? The answer is simple and complex at the same time: a pilot has to be both a flight manager and an aviator. The pilot needs to be able to switch between both skill sets – flight deck management skills and core “stick and rudder” flying skills – as the circumstances require. Pilots must be able to think “outside the box”, i.e. be trained for non-linear, unpredictable and undefined events.

Based on this observation, a training scheme can be developed to bring someone with no flying to a proficiency level that embraces both skill sets. But, once we have trained a new pilot up to that skill level, the next challenge arises: how to continue training the young first officer throughout their career, so they can keep and improve their skill set whilst at the same time mastering the ever increasing complexity of technology and automation?

The pilot answer is reflected in the IPS, issued in March 2011 and which defines IFALPA’s position on the future of pilot training. The IFALPA position sets out the factors that are fundamental for pilot training starting from the initial selection process up to the enhancement of the pilot skills throughout a career. ECA and its members’ training experts have actively contributed to establishing the IPTS and a Manual is now under development.

The pilot profession is under pressure, not only because of the training challenges mentioned above but also because various stakeholders are exploring how to reduce the expensive training cost. But let’s not fall in the trap of a purely cost-driven approach that could easily compromise aviation safety.

Enough training both in quality AND in quantity, needs to be provided from day 1 when a candidate enrolls to become a pilot, right up to the day of retirement. Pilots are the first to ask for adequate, sufficient and meaningful training. Why? Because they know from firsthand experience that only a well trained pilot is able to guarantee the safety of a flight.

“Pilots are the first to ask for adequate, sufficient and meaningful training. Why? Because they know from firsthand experience that only a well trained pilot is able to guarantee the safety of a flight.”

Picture by Ariel Shocrón

Pilots are concerned. Concerned about the level of training they will get in future. Read ‘level of training’ as meaning both quality and quantity, because both are under pressure. Add to this the challenge to cope with the ever increasing automation on the flight deck. Key questions therefore arise: shall we train pilots to understand what the plane is doing and teach them to simply “manage” the airplane? Or shall we train pilots to be able to really fly the plane using the so-called “stick and rudder skills” used since the dawn of aviation? The answers will shape the future aviation safety level. To shape these safety levels – and considering themselves as part of the solution – pilots have issued a common global view on training: the IFALPA Pilot Training Standard (IPTS), released a few weeks ago.

makes them more productive (i.e. more flying hours during commercial operations) and eliminates part of the expensive training cost. But let’s not fall in the trap of a purely cost-driven approach that could easily compromise aviation safety.

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The European Cockpit Association is the association of Flight Crew Unions from European States. Based in Brussels, ECA has 38 Member Associations, representing over 38,000 pilots from 38 countries. For more information: www.eurocockpit.be.