



Keep Asking “Why?”

Thank you for the excellent article on the Coast Air ATR 42 incident (ASW, 3/09, p. 32). It has been the subject of two long discussions here as an excellent example to illustrate organizational latent conditions leading to mishaps.

One small thing that you might want to think about — the first sentence of the article: “The airline’s failure to promptly update its standard operating procedures was among organizational deficiencies that contributed to the loss of control of an ATR 42-320 during an encounter with severe icing ...”

As part of our safety management system curriculum here, we try to steer people away from statements such as, “The pilot failed to ...,” for two reasons. First, such formulations reinforce

a blame culture and put all the onus on a single entity. Second, since blame has been placed, they stop the process of asking “why?” that ultimately can result in finding several reasons why the organizational latent conditions led to the incident.

This is not to say that the statement, “The airline’s failure to promptly update ...” is not true. It is. But for the purpose of identifying all the latent conditions, it may not be a productive statement.

Again, thank you for your fine work. Please take these comments in the spirit they are intended, which is that through good faith dialogue we can best reach the truth.

Thomas Anthony

Aviation Safety and Security Program,
Viterbi School of Engineering
University of Southern California



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