



**Disputing Composites' Role in Accident**

Just wanted to comment on "The Composite Evolution" [ASW, 3/07, p. 17].

While I thought you tried to write in a balanced way about changes composites are bringing to the 21st century, the "Composites in Accidents" sidebar about the Nov. 12, 2001, fatal accident involving an American Airlines Airbus A300 totally missed the mark. Adding in brackets "[which was made with composite materials]" after the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board's words "the in-flight separation of the vertical stabilizer" showed your own editorial bias. I've pasted the probable cause findings from the NTSB report here:

*The National Transportation Safety Board determines the*

*probable cause(s) of this accident as follows.*

*... the in-flight separation of the vertical stabilizer as a result of the loads beyond ultimate design that were created by the first officer's unnecessary and excessive rudder pedal inputs. Contributing to these rudder pedal inputs ...*

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration requires all materials used in commercial jet transports to meet or exceed structural load criteria, be they aluminum alloy, composites or cardboard. The Airbus tragedy resulted from excessive loads beyond the design capability of the structure. It was not a result of the structure's material properties.

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*Aviation Safety World encourages comments from readers, and will assume that letters and e-mails are meant for publication unless otherwise stated. Correspondence is subject to editing for length and clarity.*

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