



Is MPL a Dangerfield?

would like to congratulate *AeroSafety World* for recognizing and reacting to the emerging aviation safety threats (“Shifting Focus” by J.A. Donoghue and “Beyond Technical” by William R. Voss; ASW, 12/07, p. 1 and p. 16, respectively).

“Go or No-Go” (ASW, 12/07, p. 28) by Oddvard Johnsen was also excellent.

It was interesting to see an article on the multi-crew pilot license (MPL) program (“Zero Time to First Officer” by Wayne Rosenkrans) in the same issue (p. 38). The program deserves the scrutiny it is undergoing, which made the InSight article “Quality Control for Pilots,” by Constance Bovier (ASW, 3/08, p. 24), a timely report. Neither article gave much credit to real-world experience, which seems to have become the pilot-qualifications version of the late comedian Rodney Dangerfield’s complaint, “I don’t get no respect.”

The Alteon representative’s hypothetical suggestion that an MPL-trained first officer might be as good a choice (or better?) for an airline first officer position as a 1,000-hour pilot flying a cargo turboprop at night got my attention. It seems to me to be contrary to accident investigation

lessons learned over the past 20 years or so, which, I believe, generally indicate that real-world experience is a good thing.

Therefore, Alteon’s discounting of flight experience, which has also been expressed by other advocates of the MPL program, is interesting. All other factors being equal, and assuming the 1,000-hour pilot had completed airline training in the airplane to be flown on the line, I would suggest to Alteon and other MPL advocates that the 1,000-hour night cargo pilot might very well be a more desirable candidate than the 250–300 mostly-simulator-hour MPL graduate.

Real nighttime all-weather experience in any airplane is quite different from accelerated basic flight and crew resource management (CRM) training in ground training devices, and provides an intensive opportunity for a pilot to develop his or her skills in survival, airplane handling, decision making, risk evaluating and crew coordinating where it truly matters — in actual flight.

The product of the MPL programs as currently described will be first officers whose qualifications consist primarily of passing basic flight-training check rides in a simulated, risk-free environment, plus the

receipt of heavy doses of CRM coursework. Does this emphasis on simulation and CRM justify a “Rodneying” (de-emphasis) of real-world experience? In airplanes requiring two or more cockpit crewmembers, is the resulting workload on the pilots-in-command — as their new first officers take their initial steps into the real world of aviation — fully understood and addressed?

The MPL advocates would apparently say yes to the above questions. I hope they are correct.

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AeroSafety 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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