

STEPPING Down

One of the advantages of our new journal format is that the Flight Safety Foundation (FSF) President gets one page each month to express his thoughts. For me this opportunity will be short-lived. I am writing this as president; when you read it I will be past president. As previously announced, I step down on Oct. 1, and hand FSF's reins to Bill Voss, our new president and CEO.

Of course, I am not retiring without some sadness, but I also have much gratitude for the privilege of having had a career packed with experiences spanning more than 53 continuous years in aviation.

But undoubtedly the most significant period for me has been my 13 years at FSF's helm. The organization has changed significantly, today firmly established, respected and financially secure. While it has no legal or regulatory standing, the Foundation has a powerful voice; when FSF speaks, the aviation industry listens.

The Foundation is known for initiating safety improvements, many of which are taken for granted today. Lately we have championed flight operational quality assurance, or FOQA, training proven to prevent accidents. We led the industry's fight to reduce approach and landing and controlled flight into terrain accidents. More recently, we developed guidelines for the operation of new long range corporate and airline aircraft. We also initiated changes to ICAO Annex 13 regulations concerning accident investigations, a major success that prevents judicial interference from hindering investigations. A new initiative is aimed at reducing ground accidents, which cost the industry many lives and more than US\$5 billion every year. And there are other programs, as well.

It's a bold thing to say, but FSF is today involved in, or actually leading, just about every important safety initiative under way in the world.

It is in human nature to be industrious, to develop new and better ways of doing business. Safety is not the prime reason for business, but safety must be an essential ingredient or there won't be much business. Consequently, there can be no higher calling than to ensure that safety is maintained and constantly improved. This has been my calling, and every day I remember that our efforts help reduce costs, prevent injuries and save lives.

Aviation is an incredibly safe industry. But we must not take safety for granted. Maintaining safety is a never-ending task that allows no relaxation of the many defenses that have been developed to ensure the very high standards we now enjoy.

Young though it is, aviation is by far the safest means of mass transportation. It has changed the face of the world and its economy, and I am proud to have been a part of it. However, the part I have played would not have been possible without the support of the colleagues with whom I have worked and to whom I owe much gratitude.

Now I pass the FSF baton to Bill Voss. He is ideally suited to take on the leadership of this great organization, and I will watch in awe as FSF and the industry soar to even greater heights in the years to come.



Stuart Matthews.

*Stuart Matthews
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