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IAOPA Calls for Worldwide Standard for Aviation Safety Reporting, Data Collection, and Analysis

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Frederick, MD, USA – An international coalition of pilots’ organizations on Tuesday called on the world body governing international aviation, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), to standardize aviation accident reporting. In a report delivered at ICAO headquarters in Montreal, Québec, Canada, the International Council of Aircraft Owner and Pilot Associations (IAOPA) said absent such standardization, attempts to regulate and improve air safety are “largely guesswork.”

Speaking to a High Level Safety Conference, IAOPA General Secretary John Sheehan said, “IAOPA is quite concerned that adequate accident and incident statistical data is not always available for worldwide general aviation applications, especially for light general aviation operations (less than 2,250 kg maximum takeoff mass, or 4,950 lbs. maximum takeoff weight).”

Sheehan went on to tell the conference that while elementary data regarding accidents and incidents are sometimes available in some countries, the data are often rudimentary, non-specific or poorly categorized to the point of being of little value. “Equally frustrating is the lack of detailed data regarding numbers of pilots, aircraft, and aircraft operations,” he continued. “Without these data even elementary statistical inferences regarding accident rates and causes cannot be made. Unless a rate for various categories of accidents can be established it will be very difficult to target pilot training, aircraft performance, maintenance and infrastructure deficiencies. Without these, safety promotion and regulatory initiatives are imprecise and largely guesswork.”

In the United States, the AOPA Air Safety Foundation is able to make extensive use of the robust data collection and storage practices of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). “Because of the pilot and aircraft operation information collected by the FAA, we are able to establish a common denominator and apply it to the accident information collected by the NTSB,” said Air Safety Foundation President Bruce Landsberg. “And based on those analyses, we are able to identify areas of concern and, working with pilots and government agencies, develop safety education to address the concerns.”

In his report to ICAO, IAOPA’s Sheehan called for similarly robust data collection and storage practices worldwide and offered three proposals:

- States should conduct accident investigations of all civil aircraft accidents occurring within their borders and record the data resulting from those investigations in a publically accessible database.
- State aviation accident databases should be categorized and formatted to utilize the ICAO Accident/Incident Reporting (ADREP) system.
- ICAO should require that all civil aviation accidents reports be forwarded to them for archiving in the ADREP database.

“International general aviation does not have access to a common and standardized accident/incident database,” concluded Sheehan. “Having this access would improve the ability of ICAO, [member countries], and the general aviation community to better understand the nature of general aviation accidents, facilitating the improvement of safety worldwide.”

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