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IAOPA to ICAO: “Pilot Training, Experience Enhance Safety at Airports Without Control Towers”

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Frederick, MD, USA – Tens of thousands of landing facilities worldwide have no control tower, but thanks to pilot training and experience, plus airport improvement programs and airport operator oversight, millions of flights take off and land safely at those airports every year. That was the message the International Council of Aircraft Owner and Pilot Associations (IAOPA) conveyed at the Global Runway Safety Symposium hosted by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Montreal, Canada, 24-26 May 2011.

IAOPA General Secretary John Sheehan told delegates to the symposium that these small airports provide access to small and remote communities, providing a critical economic and safety lifeline for millions of people.

The small airport environment may not provide some of the more desirable features of larger airline-served airports, Sheehan noted. Location in remote areas, short and narrow runways, irregular surfaces, precipitous terrain, non-standard designs and infrequent maintenance can challenge the general aviation pilots.

Yet, he told the symposium, “accidents resulting from the unique nature of small airports are minimal. Pilot awareness, education and proficiency make the difference in ensuring safe operations in a non-towered airports. When this is supported by adequate airport maintenance, operator oversight and a timely notices-to-airmen (NOTAM) system, safe operations may be assured.”

Sheehan called on symposium participants to promote pilot education and proficiency and small airport oversight and awareness. He cited the training programs (such as the free online safety courses available on the [AOPA Air Safety Institute](#) website) provided by the 69 worldwide IAOPA affiliates as an example of the types of awareness and education programs available.

IAOPA represents the interests of more than 450,000 general aviation and aerial work pilots and aircraft operators through AOPA affiliates in 69 countries around the world. The Council was formed in 1962 to provide a voice for general aviation in world aviation forums. For more information, visit www.iaopa.org.

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