

FLIGHT INTERNATIONAL

We welcome your letters on any aspect of the aerospace industry.

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Medicals: are they worth it?

I was concerned to hear that a colleague, of a similar age and background, has just suffered renal failure followed by severe stroke and is critically ill in hospital. This, presumably, follows the regulatory requirement for "enhanced" medical examination in the case of over 60 professional pilots.

On top of the normal six-monthly medical, stress ECG and echo-sounding was required. Enhanced eye test was mandatory and a more, in-depth study of blood analyses necessary. Emerging with a class one medical certificate, how is it that some months later, a pilot winds up in this critical state?

As pilots, we are subject to stringent medical evaluation and monitoring. The older groups face this every six months and now, over age 60, "enhanced" status. After 40 years in the industry and

SAFETY

Captains: exert your authority

Aircraft commanders are seeing their authority eroded. What happens to good old captaincy when the European Union and most of its member states accept much longer working hours, later retirement and job contracts involving operating from two separate "home" bases? And then there are fully automated "green approaches" that do not take into account the need to keep the throttles higher than idle in icing conditions, EU-imposed fines for delay, airlines encouraging pilots to fly Boeing 747s half way around the world on three engines, and air traffic control using computers to squeeze in more landings through time-based separation just as Airbus A380s with higher wake turbulence are arriving at our busiest airports.

Again this year the top item on the US National Transportation Safety Board's most wanted list of aviation safety improvements is action on icing. Icing is one remaining area captains need to exercise their discretion, since aviation authorities like the US Federal Aviation Administration obviously don't care.

Airlines have run-up procedures approved by the aviation authorities, but with standards far below the manufacturers' standards, which demand: "Whenever you have engine anti-ice ON, you shall do run-ups." Companies and national authorities have accepted less to avoid upsetting timetables and those who live near airports.

I challenge all captains to compare icing procedures and choose the strictest ones. Otherwise the scenario proposed by Joseph Gano (*Flight International*, 12-18 June) might as well come true: pilots can be abandoned, the cockpit space will become a Super First Class with the control columns intact so that these special passengers can pretend to be in control.

Oluf Husted
Slagelse, Denmark

around 50 medicals, I am not confident that the medical profession can predict my demise.

Capt Gordon MacFarlane
Bahrain

Change student callsigns

It is always sad to read of the death of anybody as a result of a flying accident, and all the more so when the person concerned is as young as the student pilot



Jet Provost loss led to new callsign

whose accident you referred to in Comment (*Flight International*, 24-30 July).

Thirty years ago the Royal Air

Force lost a Jet Provost after a student pilot was forced to eject in cloud after being overloaded by air traffic control instructions and losing control of the aircraft. As a result, the word "Tyro" was added when necessary to the callsign used by student pilots to denote to air traffic controllers their lack of experience.

I strongly recommend that the UK Civil Aviation Authority mandate the addition of this word to callsigns used by all student pilots when flying solo and indeed by any pilot whose inexperience in any situation may prejudice the safety of the aircraft.

Paul Baker
Uckfield, Sussex, UK

Don't overlook the disabled

Eric Davidson is amazed that airlines "pay lip service to safety" by seating disabled passengers in aisle seats (*Flight International*, 3-9 July). As a disabled passenger, I suspect he isn't seeing the full picture. For many disabled passengers, the aisle seat is the only viable one. They may need, for instance, to make a wheelchair to seat transfer. For many more of us the aisle seat offers more practical access to our seat.

Someone's escape might be impeded by a disabled passenger, but it is also possible they might be impeded by a tall rugby player who happens to freeze in terror or an able-bodied twenty-something who insists on trying to retrieve their case from the overhead bin.

The one valid point I think Mr Davidson raises is that there is no clarification given as to how disabled passengers will be assisted in a cabin evacuation. I can likely make it to the escape slide without help, but without my crutches (in the overhead bin), getting clear of the aircraft once off the slide may be more problematic.

Airlines do need to pay more than lip service to safety, but they also need to pay more than lip service to equality of access.

David Gillon
Chatham, Kent, UK

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AIRBUS VS BOEING

A Range Rover to a Mini? A Mini is smaller, far faster, handles better, more reliable and much sexier. A more appropriate analogy might be a Mini (787) to a London bus!

deacon

ON THE TAM CRASH

I think it was also aquaplaning! The crew tried to slow using the reversers, probably forgetting the right-hand thrust reverser was deactivated.

Gazza

FIRST FLIGHT EXPERIENCES

Mine was a small Cessna. The instructor's words as I got in: "If you happen to look at the fuel gauge and it says empty, don't panic because it doesn't work."

Batfink