

Give the American public the same degree of aviation safety as senior government officials

The FAA's position that unstopable blinding smoke in the cockpit is not an "unsafe condition" violates its Congressional mandate to (1) establish minimum safety standards and (2) hold the airlines to the highest possible standards. To date, the only action the FAA has taken is to tell pilots that when they cannot stop the smoke, land as soon as possible. In so doing, the FAA fails to tell pilots (1) how they are supposed to see when blinding smoke cannot be stopped nor (2) mandate technology that permits pilots to see under conditions of unstopable blinding smoke. Nevertheless, the FAA equips its own VIP aircraft to permit its pilots to see under these same unstopable blinding smoke conditions.

An ALPA study shows that on average one unscheduled or emergency landing takes place every day in North America alone due to smoke/fire events. The NTSB has asked the FAA for over 40 years to solve the unsafe condition of continuous blinding smoke in the cockpit. Likewise, the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) has asked the FAA for almost two decades to solve this same unsafe condition.

Senator Inouye attempted unsuccessfully to get Congress to act on the matter in the mid-1990s. A decade later, prior to his retirement as Secretary of Transportation in July 2006, Norman Mineta was actively working to eliminate the unsafe condition of unstopable blinding smoke in the cockpit. Since Sen. Inouye's attempt, in North America alone, more than \$350 million worth of civilian and military aircraft have been lost involving smoke in the cockpit, along with the death of more than 300 people. In a recent accident (2007) with a small corporate aircraft the pilot reported "smoke in the cockpit" and crashed within minutes into a house killing and injuring people on the ground and killing the aircraft occupants. This tragic scenario could as easily have been a large airliner.

Aircraft are supposed to be certified to enable pilots to see when there is accumulation of unstopable blinding smoke in the cockpit. The FAA certified equipment, systems and procedures have repeatedly failed to do so. One of the FAA's "minimum" safety requirements states that the failure of any system or component shall not have catastrophic consequences more than once in one billion flight hours. According to recent Boeing data, virtually the entire transport fleet of the western world has not flown one billion flight hours in the last half century. Consequently, there should not have been a single accident due to the failure to eliminate hazardous quantities of smoke in the cockpit. Yet scores of accidents over the last 50 years have resulted, in which unstopable blinding smoke in the cockpit was a cause or a factor. Numerous serious incidents also attest to the unsafe conditions. Not being able to see to fly or land an aircraft is below minimum FAA safety standards and has catastrophic consequences.

In spite of the FAA's failure to act on its congressional mandate, many Fortune 500 companies, such as NetJets (with approximately 700 aircraft), FedEx feeder aircraft, the Secretary of Transportation, Secretary of Homeland Security, and senior military VIP aircraft fly with the same technology that permits the pilots on FAA's VIP aircraft to see when there is unstopable blinding smoke in the cockpit. As a result, a two-tier safety standard exists: one for senior government officials and one for the masses. Only one airline, JetBlue, has voluntarily installed technology to match the FAA's lead.

Congress should act to provide the minimum safety standard on the airlines that the FAA has failed to implement. This would give the flying public the same degree of safety against unstopable blinding smoke for the pilots of their aircraft as senior government officials have for theirs. For a fuller explanation, see—

<http://www.smokeinthecockpit.com/references/Blinding-Smoke.pdf>