



Complacency

Of the many threats to a successful safety program, one of the most common and persistent is complacency. Complacency in itself is a deceiving and unwarranted satisfaction with a given level of proficiency, which leads to stagnation and unknowing deterioration of proficiency. It is of primary concern to any organization and a major problem area requiring constant supervisory surveillance. When it develops among pilots or maintenance personnel, it inevitably results in mishaps, both in the air and on the ground.

Recognizing the onset of complacency is not a difficult task. Signs develop as supervisory controls are relaxed and objectives become vague. There is an observable lack of dedication and enthusiasm to the job, and the routine prescribed standards of performance and care are disregarded. For example, pilots in a routine environment, lulled by their level of experience and proficiency, may rationalize that detailed flight planning is unnecessary. Briefings become sketchy or nonexistent as the pilots assume that crew members understand what is expected of them, or what their responsibilities and assignments are. This attitude will be reflected throughout the entire flight, resulting in inefficient utilization of flight time, which may terminate in an incident, accident, or injury. Similar analogies can be made for the maintenance department personnel who would soon reflect the effect of a complacent attitude through mismanagement of men and material assets. The results are the same: a disregard for the normal standards of quality workmanship, a lack of commitment, and an increase in accident potential.

The old cliché “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is certainly applicable in this case. Combating complacency once it has developed is extremely difficult. Preventing its development is obviously the simplest and desired approach to the problem. In either case, prevention or correction, the measures to be taken are basically the same. Supervisors must establish the required standards of performance and quality production that become well known and understood. Following this, the supervisor must assure that the established standards are maintained through the exercise of reasonable discipline and firm leadership. Supervisors must delineate the objective requirements and provide their personnel with the means by which ultimate achievement can be accomplished. Pilots, mechanics, and clerks provided with challenging and attainable goals along with the knowledge and incentive required to achieve these objectives will not be complacent.

Commanding Officer
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