
Date: 20 December 2009

From the Secretary General

Dear Colleagues, Friends, Co-workers, and other interested persons.

When the end of this year is nearing, it is time to reflect on what happened during last and look forward to next year,

Last year has been a busy one, what's new? We had a number of sensitive issues we brought out through press releases and with our contacts within the various organisation we deal with regularly. The issues, such as pilots not reporting defects, had lots of impact as well as our follow up where we have the ignoring of the Minimum Equipment List (MEL) which has been a regular occurrence by many airlines. We have carried out investigations and from the Preamble of the Official MEL of major airline manufacturers, it is clear that an aircraft should only continue its flight after a defect found become clear after investigation or trouble shooting has been carried out by Licensed Engineers or Mechanics and it has been made clear the defect is exactly known and through deactivation of the particular system the MEL can be used as a means to continue flight in a safe manner. This is often not the preferred way to operate within many major or minor airlines since that disrupt their operation.

We have asked both the major manufacturers Airbus and Boeing (before our annual congress in Sept 2009) whether they are willing to give us a statement or explanation on how to use the MEL. So far both remain suspiciously silent. They probably know that most operators want to continue abusing regulations rather than follow the rules to strict guidelines because of financial motives.

I must say that the attitude of most aviation organisations such as EASA, FAA and other major and small national authorities or the European transport committee still is that they often behave like those 3 monkeys: They don't want to talk about it, They don't want to see problems and certainly as is our experience over the many years they do listen to you because they have to, but just don't want to hear it.



This way many authorities can continue to keep up the attitude that when something happens in a crash or a major incident they can have that innocent look of surprise, while hiding that they know the truth and their own ignorance and failing oversight. Again we have challenged the Authorities to do their own investigation and slowly they (under pressure of organisations such as EASA that now have made these checks part of their own investigation (in strong demand by AEI) but still we wait for results and actions. We know from inside sources that it is starting to get effect but still too little, too late and too slow.

When you report (and our colleagues have reported frequently over the last couple of years) unsafe situations or sometimes even pure fraud, we have not seen any activity or results from the European Occurrence reporting system, as should be the case when this systems works properly. You might expect that from the reports serious investigations would be the result and actions to fix the problems or investigate issues like fraud would be high on the list of authorities activities. I am sorry to say that even with the evidence clearly on the table this evidence is simply ignored. The authorities have an obligation of oversight. This usually results in yearly audit (announced well in advance?) from the authorities' on the operators and airlines. Unfortunately the thousands of reports are not used to direct the authorities to carry out proper investigations. I sometimes get the feeling these occurrence findings are used to make sure these area are deliberately "forgotten" knowing that these audits would created too much of a risk for problems found and that would have a negative impact on the airlines, as well as too much work for the authorities. They like their offices nice and tidy, their desks empty so they can be home for Christmas on time and in peace. We will continue to persuade the authorities starting to do what is their prime function, Proper oversight!

Several initiatives are started now and in the near future and AEI desires to be part of it. One of these is the EASA Advisory Safety Committee. From the setup as well as the ToR (Terms of Reference) it appears that this initiative (in essence a good idea) turns out to be a poor attempt to look proactive. If EASA want to develop a future safety strategy, it seems it does not want to do this with the existing groups of experts in place, such as EASA Strategic Safety Initiative ESSI (ECAST, EHASt; EGAST); SSCC or others. In our vision the activities of this new working group should be based on EASA's own core objectives such as their ideal to become the Nr 1 Aviation Authority in the world and/or to level out the existing European aviation rules and regulation at/or near the highest existing in the EU. To reach such goals I believe it is important that decisions about those goals are based on facts, reliable data, thorough study results and not emotions, popular statements or political goals. The facts should be then thoroughly and consistently studied and decisions should be made on the outcome of that process, not the "preferred by some with their own (hidden?) agenda" direction. Strategy means planning, gathering data, field knowledge, and the feeling what's right within the "troops", Internal in EASA and external organization EASA regularly cooperates with, that have a vast amount of experience on hand.

AEI will continue its fight for better safety the coming year and remain a criticaster to what's happening in the aviation world in which we play a vital role to keep safety at the ultimate level. It is AEI believe that if you think safety is expensive, try having an accident!

For Most of us Christmas and New Year are times when at least many of us have to work some or all of the Days, Nights of festival days as is part of our profession. From the (not empty and tidy) desk at the AEI office, I wish all of you in the frontline of aviation maintenance some happy and peaceful days with not too much bad weather and not too many defects to be solved at last minute with a minimum of workforce available on the shift.

Merry Christmas and a Happy 2010.



Fred Bruggeman
AEI Secretary General