

Chapter 736 Newsletter for December 2013



Christmas Get-together

Check the next meeting segment at the end of this newsletter for info regarding our annual holiday gathering. It will be at a special time and place.

Shell reveals unleaded avgas

Shell Aviation, a subsidiary of the multinational oil giant Royal Dutch Shell, announced Dec. 3 that a 10-year effort in the laboratory has produced a fuel that may put a long-sought goal—once thought to be unattainable—within reach: a lead-free “performance drop-in” replacement for 100LL that could power any aircraft in the piston fleet.

The lead-free formulation has a motor octane number (MON) over 100, a critical factor in formulating a fleetwide fuel that could power high-compression engines. Shell’s new lead-free formula has passed preliminary tests in Lycoming engines on the ground, and a Piper Saratoga recently flew for about an hour on the fuel, the first of many tests that will be required for certification. The company will pursue fleetwide certification rather than a model-by-model approach.

The FAA has a goal of deploying a lead-free piston aviation fuel by 2018, though the company may be able to achieve required approvals and start distribution sooner than that. Shell is the first major oil company to announce an unleaded avgas formulation.

Another design goal is to keep the retail price similar to avgas, though it is too early to know exactly what the new fuel would sell for. Shell has only just begun conversations with the various regulatory agencies involved. The fuel will be submitted for approval from the FAA, ASTM, and the European Aviation Safety Agency.

Shell is now among three companies that have announced unleaded formulations that could replace avgas in piston aircraft in a matter of just a few years, pending additional testing and regulatory approval. Shell is by far the largest of the companies known to be developing unleaded aviation gasoline.

EAA Urges Support for Bill on Sleep Apnea Policy

EAA urges members to contact their congressional representatives and express support for a bipartisan bill that would force the FAA to subject its new draconian sleep apnea policy to a formal rulemaking and public comment process.

The legislation (H.R. 3578) has been approved by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and is now headed for the full House. EAA and other GA organizations support this bill and are asking their members to urge their representatives to join as co-sponsors.

The FAA's new policy, introduced in November, would require any airman applying for a medical certificate with a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or greater and a neck size of 17 inches or greater to be evaluated by a sleep specialist and, if diagnosed with a disorder, receive any treatment deemed necessary prior to receiving certification. FAA's federal air surgeon, Dr. Fred Tilton, stated that "once we have appropriately dealt with every airman examinee who has a BMI of 40 or greater, we will gradually expand the testing pool by going to lower BMI measurements until we have identified and assured treatment for every airman with OSA."

EAA and its Aeromedical Advisory Council believe the new FAA policy is unnecessary and overreaching, and would place additional burdens and expense on individual aviators. EAA has expressed its objections to both the policy and the process under which it was enacted to FAA, but the agency dismissed those objections.

H.R. 3578 requires the OSA policy to undergo a formal rulemaking process before it can go into effect. Rulemaking includes an opportunity for public comment and a cost-benefit analysis. A similar bill concerning sleep apnea rules in the commercial trucking industry recently passed by unanimous consent.

Senators Demand Answers from DHS CBP

After waiting more than a month for answers to their questions about numerous stops and searches of law-abiding pilots on domestic general aviation flights, members of the

Senate GA Caucus have sent a new demand for information to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Sens. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) and Jim Risch (R-Idaho) sent a follow-up letter to DHS Acting Secretary Rand Beers on Dec. 3. The letter sets a Dec. 16 deadline for DHS, the parent agency for Customs and Border Protection (CBP), to provide records of all CBP stops of general aviation flights since 2009, including explanations of the “reasonable suspicion” that led to each stop and the “probable cause” that resulted in a search. The missive follows an Oct. 30 letter requesting the same information no later than Nov. 15.

The follow-up letter notes that unwarranted stops and searches are continuing in the face of public outcry.

The letter is just the latest salvo in a series of efforts to hold DHS and CBP accountable for their actions. AOPA has spent months attempting to get to the bottom of more than 40 reports of stops and searches by CBP or local law enforcement acting at the agency’s request. In each case CBP, which is charged with border security, stopped flights that never left the United States. Pilots report that several of the stops involved drawn weapons and the use of dogs, but in no case did CBP find evidence of criminal activity.

In September, AOPA member Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.), co-chair of the House GA Caucus, asked for an Inspector General investigation into the incidents. Later that month, two notices of proposed rulemaking (NPRMs) indicated that CBP wanted to change the status of some of its records, including those related to the stops, to make them secret and unavailable for public scrutiny. The timing of the request and the short period allowed for public comment raised alarm bells.

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be a pot luck Christmas get together at Bruce Patten’s home on **Monday, December 16th**. The get together will begin at 6:00 pm. Everyone bring something for the occasion.

Bruce’s address is: 1161 E. Pond Rd, Smithfield, ME

Here are directions to Bruce’s house

From Waterville, go out Rt. 137 (left at the Rt. 95 off ramp by the Weathervane Restaurant) through Oakland. After the Corner Store and last street light go exactly 5 miles on Rt. 137. Turn right just before D&L Market onto East Pond Road. Bruce is exactly 5 miles down this road on the right. It is a round house with his name on the mail box.