The Leader In Recreational Aviation

Chapter 736 Newsletter for June 2019

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held at Curtis Air at Pittsfield Municipal airport (2B7) on **Monday, June 24th at 6:00 pm**.

Special issuance medical possible for diabetes

Diabetic pilots whose blood sugars are well controlled on oral anti-hyperglycemic medications, excluding insulin, may be granted a Special Issuance Authorization for a first-, second-, or third-class medical certificate.

The applicant must demonstrate a controlled blood glucose level and an absence of any diabetic complications. The physician is looking for all of the "opathies." The "opathies" are neuropathy (nerve damage), retinopathy (retina damage), and nephropathy (kidney damage). A hemoglobin A1C must be taken 30 days before the examination. The HgA1C will show how much glucose is coating the hemoglobin in the blood. The goal HgA1C is less than 5.7%. The FAA will allow up to 8.9%.

The FAA developed a chart of acceptable combinations of oral/injectable medications to assist pilots and physicians in selecting appropriate therapy when more than one medication is needed. No more than one medication from each group and up to 3 oral medications total from the 7 classes are acceptable for use.

Diet, exercise, and medications have been proven to save lives in the diabetic patient, which of course includes the diabetic pilot. Compliance with guideline and evidence-based medications is not just important, but is a necessity. Non-compliance with diabetic medications is a path leading to bad outcomes and most importantly an inability to retain a medical certificate. Be a "Goldilocks" diabetic. Keep your blood in the "just right" range and enjoy your flying.

SEBRING CANCELS US SPORT AVIATION EXPO

FOCUS SHIFTS TO YOUTH, DRONES

The annual U.S. Sport Aviation Expo hosted at Florida's Sebring Regional Airport since 2003 has been canceled effective immediately, the airport authority announced May 30.

A farewell message posted on the official website thanked attendees for “15 incredible years” after the January 2020 event was scrubbed.

“The U.S. Sport Expo has done a good job with its original mission,” said U.S. Sport Aviation Expo Program Manager Janice Rearick, who explained that the airport would instead focus on youth and growing the future of aviation. “It became very clear that after 15 years the light sport platform had its own legs,” while at the same time, the drone industry gained momentum.

She pointed out that the expo had become more focused on youth in recent years and had added additional programming for them. A Young Aviators Zone exposed middle- and high-school students to aviation careers, which dovetailed with an industrywide challenge to increase the pilot population. “We want to show them all the possibilities they could have in aviation,” Rearick said.

She explained that the city of Sebring’s Highlands County school board was one of dozens across the United States that is participating in the AOPA High School Initiative that offers free aviation-based science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) curriculum to ninth and tenth grade teachers and students. “The Sebring airport wants to continue to devote more time to youth aviation experiences and really put a focus on” building the next generation of aviators, whether they fly conventional aircraft or drones. “Unmanned systems can be in a lot of places and Sebring wants to be part of that,” she emphasized.

The Sebring event had grown in popularity since light sport aircraft burst onto the scene in the early 2000s with hopes to provide pilots with a lower-cost pathway to the sky through smaller aircraft and alternative licensing regulations.

FAA Aerospace Medical Certification Division experiencing delays

If you have or expect to need a special issuance medical, plan for a lengthy delay.

Initiatives to improve the overall experience both for pilots and the FAA have brought about modest success. Pilots with certain medical conditions requiring special issuances would no longer be required to send their periodic evaluations to the FAA and then wait, and wait, and wait until the FAA granted them a new authorization. Under AME-Assisted Special Issuance, AASI, Aviation Medical Examiners are authorized to reissue subsequent medical certificate special issuances after the FAA has granted the initial authorization. Certain forms of arthritis, atrial fibrillation, bladder, breast, and prostate cancers, minor heart arrhythmias, hypo and hyperthyroidism, and migraine headaches are conditions that still fall in the AASI category.

Annually, the FAA has between 30 and 35 thousand pilots under special issuance authorizations. BasicMed became effective in May 2017 and many pilots, more than 48,000 currently, who were under the thumb of a special issuance no longer are required to provide costly medical testing and evaluations to the FAA. That provided some relief for the FAA’s Aerospace Medical Certification Division and the nine regional medical offices. However, the problem persists, and many of those pilots still affected by the

backlog are professional pilots facing the loss of their livelihood brought on by issuance delays.

As flying season is upon us, delays will likely continue. If you hold or expect to need a special issuance medical, plan for a lengthy delay. Do your homework on the medical condition you are reporting. Have the required information with you when you visit the AME, retain copies of everything, and mail the records yourself to the FAA.

MISTAKES AND MITIGATIONS

STUDY: MISCOMMUNICATION CAUSES MANY ALTITUDE ERRORS

Miscommunication played a role in many cases of commercial and general aviation pilots operating aircraft at "unexpected or unintended" altitudes, according to an FAA human-factors study.

Other leading causes of altitude-compliance failures—one of five issues flagged as contributing to fight-safety risk in 2018 by the FAA Air Traffic Organization's Top 5 Steering Committee—diverged in the two groups of pilots.

The research by the FAA's Human Performance Team, presented in a report released in December 2018, included recommendations for corrective actions in a range of areas from training to technology from a focus group consisting of pilots, air traffic controllers, and other experts who reviewed the data.

The research team examined 294 events in which altitude-compliance failures occurred. The causal factor "miscommunication/readback error" was present in 27 of the 187 general aviation events studied, and in 17 of the 107 commercial aviation occurrences. Four other leading causal factors noted for GA occurrences were characterized as departure/cleared altitude violation; difficulty maintaining altitude/no autopilot; environmental/equipment factor; and crossing restrictions on procedures. In the commercial group, the crossing restriction issue was second on the causal factor list, followed by inappropriate separations; similar-sounding call signs; and amended altitudes in descents or climbs.

Regardless of other human-factor themes present, risk-analysis events were studied for the role of communication, with 73-percent testing positive. Casting an eye toward a technological response, the study looked at whether altitude "intent data" programmed by a pilot and provided to controllers by Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast (ADS-B) might have mitigated the events. In almost 70 percent of cases, the ADS-B data might have been useful, the report said.

The focus group proposed a series of mitigation strategies that the report "mapped" against the causal factors identified in the study—noting, for example, that pilot readback training should emphasize "listening skills in pilot training and simulation activities specifically related to reducing readback errors."

In another recommendation, the focus group suggested providing "awareness training for pilots that emphasizes the importance of alerting controllers when they may be unable to conform to a clearance or procedure restriction."

'Airport in sight'

Another focus-group offering highlighted the problem of pilots intentionally leaving an assigned altitude too quickly in the approach phase—a misunderstanding of procedure that could raise the risk of loss of separation with other aircraft. "Pilots who report the airport in sight and expect to receive a visual approach clearance sometimes believe they are cleared to descend to the airport before they are issued a visual approach clearance," the report said.

The focus group proposed revisiting a topic the FAA has attempted to address after introducing new approach terminology in recent years, noting that the agency could "disseminate training to pilots that explains the use of proper phraseology" used when a "climb via" or "descend via" clearance is issued.

Flight training for controllers?

Should air traffic controllers be required to take familiarization flights? Following up on a recommendation that pilots and controllers should find ways to understand each other's responsibilities, the 40-page document suggested that "similarly, controllers should have the opportunity to fly on familiarization flights. One participant recommended that these flights be required twice per year, to ensure controllers understand pilot workload. A training curriculum focused on teaching aircraft characteristics, flight deck familiarization, simulator training, and familiarization training is likely to increase controller awareness of pilot challenges."

The report also proposed items for follow-up study, including looking into whether specific aircraft types are particularly susceptible to altitude deviation, assessing crossing restrictions on procedures, reviewing variances in flight management systems in the aircraft "fleet mix," airspace design, and whether the misapplication of aircraft separation standards by ATC should be addressed.