THE SENTINEL

OFFICIAL SAFETY NEWSLETTER OF CIVIL AIR PATROL

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Holiday Fire Safety: Did you know that a quarter of all home fires occur in December and January? Holiday decorations can end in tragedy if guidelines are not observed. The following tips will help keep you safe this holiday season: First, choose a freshly cut tree. If you're buying from a tree lot, tap the trunk on the ground and watch the needles. If they fall off, look for a more recently cut tree. Before setting up your tree, make a fresh cut above the original cut to allow the tree to draw water more readily. Keep the trunk immersed and select a location away from heat sources to slow the drying process. Never place your tree near the fireplace. If your tree begins to lose an excessive amount of needles, remove it immediately. Only use UL-Approved electrical equipment and take care not to exceed their ratings. Don't leave Christmas lights or candles unattended. Candles are especially hazardous if surrounded by pinecones and ribbon. Keep flammables away from candles and use heavy, tip resistant, glass or metal candleholders.

This is also a good time to clean, test and replace the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Sixty percent of house-fire fatalities occur in homes with missing or disabled smoke alarms. **Make the extra effort to be safe and you'll put the odds of having a joyous holiday in your favor.**

New and Improved Safety Web Site: Looking for safety material for your unit briefings? Check out the new CAP Safety Web Site at: http://www.capnhq.gov/nhq/do/dor/index.html. The site has recently been redesigned and revitalized. Here you'll find newsletters, presentations, posters, videos, safety alerts, special interest items, risk management tools, mishap trends and an ever-growing collection of outstanding safety links. A PowerPoint safety briefing is now available for the upcoming holiday season. Hope you like it!

5-Year Aircraft Accident Trends: Recently, I provided the Safety Process Action Group with an analysis of CAPs aircraft accidents from the last 5 years. In all, 23 accidents were examined. Some of the results were surprising.

The type of involved aircraft was not a surprise. Our CAP fleet has 290 C-172 and 202 C-182 aircraft. Even though we have more C-172s, the C-182 recorded most of the accidents – 10 in all. This is partially due to the more nose heavy characteristic as compared to the C-172, which can result in hard nose wheel landings. 9 C-172, 3 gliders and 1 MT-7 were also involved in accidents.

3 cadets were at the controls during accidents. The remainder were senior members. The average age of our accident pilots was 52. If you look at the average age of just the senior members, the average age was 57.

The full spectrum of CAP flying activities was represented over the last 5 years. However, proficiency sorties took the number one spot with 7 accidents followed by flight encampments with 4.

Not surprising was the fact that Private Pilots were involved in most of the accidents – 8 in all. However, 5 CFIs, 4 ATPs and 3 Commercial Pilots were also involved. Only 3 Student Pilots made the list. Although somewhat skewed by a couple of high time, career pilots and the 3 low time student pilots the average number of flight hours for our accident pilots was 2,798. If the six pilots described above are not considered, the average number of flight hours becomes 1,470. The average flight time per pilot for the three months immediately preceding their accidents was 26.

Similar to general aviation statistics, the vast majority of CAP's aircraft accidents occurred during the landing phase of flight – 13 in all. 7 occurred during cruise, 2 during taxi and 1 in the climb.

Some troubling trends are: 3 accidents that involved medications not authorized during flight, 3 episodes that involved known "rogue" pilots that continued to fly unchecked until they had an accident, and 2 cases of fuel exhaustion. These all signal a trend of deficient airmanship and professionalism. Airmanship has been defined as a combination of discipline, skill and proficiency. All 23 accidents in the last five years showed deficiency in one or more of these critical professional pilot characteristics.

An Aircraft Mishap Sequence Worth Discussing: During a Minnesota Wing cadet orientation flight, the pilot was on short final to runway 27 when an observer on the ground radioed a warning of a possible mid-air collision with an ultra light aircraft (without a radio) departing runway 36. The pilot of the C-172 then saw the ultra light, reduced power and descended rapidly to avoid a collision. The aircraft passed within 50' of one another. Because of the rapid descent, the airspeed built to approximately 75 knots, resulting in a landing approximately halfway down the 1970' turf runway. The long landing resulted in the aircraft going past the departure end of the runway and damaging both tips of the prop. The engine did not suffer sudden stoppage and the pilot deemed the aircraft airworthy. He then flew the aircraft back to its home station. He parked an appropriate distance away from the hangar and went in to report the near mid-air collision and the prop damage. After hanging up the phone, he opened the hangar bi-fold doors from inside the hangar. He felt and heard the hangar door strike something. After going outside, he discovered that another pilot had moved the aircraft so close to the hangar that the bi-fold doors struck and damaged the rudder. Both ends of an aircraft damaged on the same day! Brief this at your next flight safety meeting and I'm sure you'll get great discussion on clearing traffic patterns, stabilized approaches, aim point / landing zone / landing in the first third of the runway, go-arounds, turf fields, runway specifications for proficiency sorties, parking / tie-down procedures, etc. A memorable mishap that should spark lively dialogue and hopefully some lessons learned.

December is National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month:
Impaired driving is a chronic problem that will affect one in three Americans in their lifetime. Nearly 42,000 people die in motor vehicle crashes each year, and about 16,000 of these are alcohol-related. Alcohol-related crashes account for one person killed every 33 minutes and one person injured every two minutes, every day of the year.

This Holiday Season . . .
The Greatest Gift You Can Give . . .
May Be a Ride Home.