

Monthly SAFECOM Report



July/ August 2009

July/ August Summary:

The Southwestern Region has continued to stay active throughout the months of July and August. The Region has managed several large fires for resource benefits, setting the example nationally, which has helped keep the flight hours to a minimum. The Region experienced two Type II fires, which are not common events during this time period. 17 SAFECOM reports were submitted in July and August, with 15 of them being maintenance related; hazard, bird strike, and airspace were the remaining categories with one a piece. Several SAFECOMs were assigned two categories for the one report.

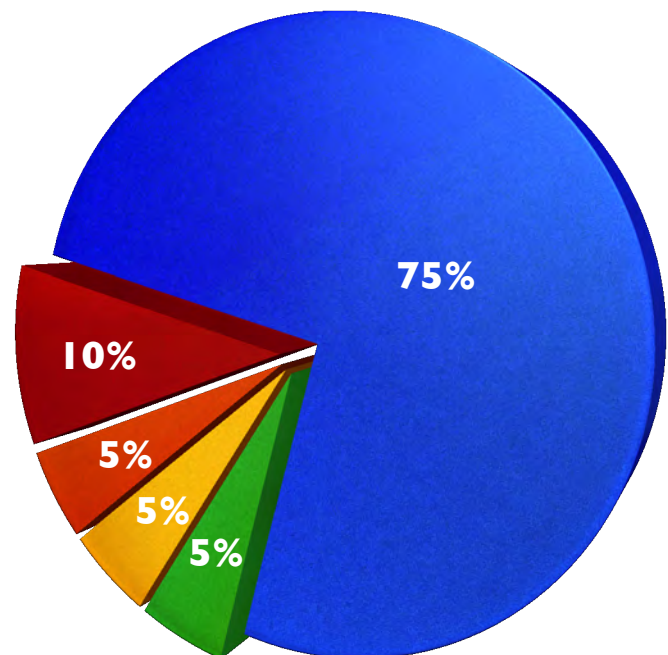
New R3 Aviation Employees:

The Southwestern Region is proud to announce the addition of three new employees to the aviation staff.

The new Regional Aviation Officer (RAO) is Kris Damsgaard. Kris is from Aviation Management Directorate (AMD), where she served as the Aviation Training Officer. She plans to be in Albuquerque the first of October.

John Bussell is the Helicopter Inspector Pilot (HIP) and Helicopter Program Manager. John has an extensive background in fire, media, and commercial work. John is currently in place in Albuquerque.

SAFECOMs Submitted



- Maintenance
- Airspace
- Incident
- Hazard
- Bird Strike

John Burfiend, formerly the Forest Aviation Officer (FAO) on the Gila National Forest, is the Regional Air Attack Program Manager. John brings extensive experience in both fire and aviation and has started his new job at the Regional Office.

All three individuals have a high commitment to aviation safety and provide strong expertise.

Please help us welcome Kris, John, and John in their new employment.

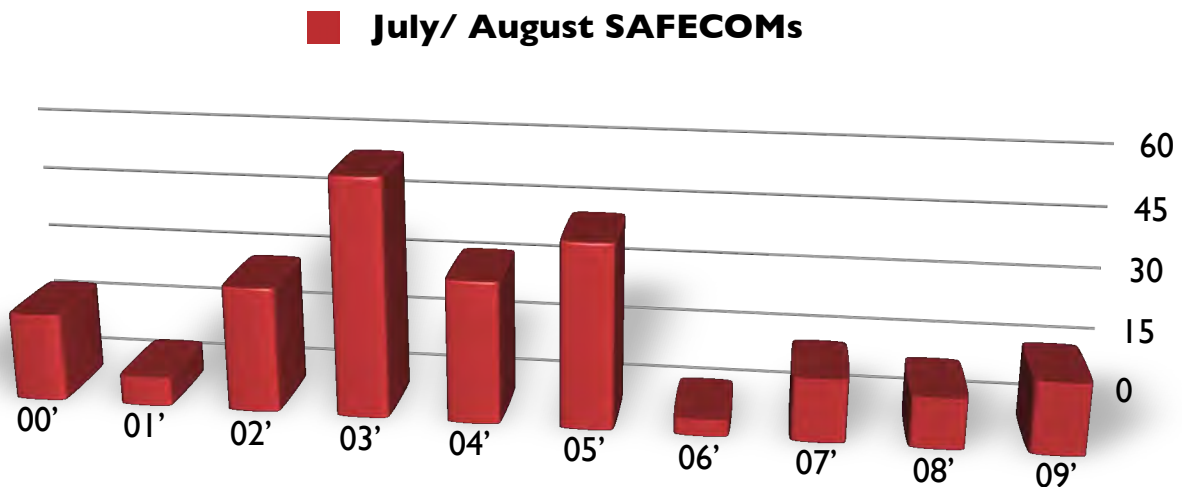
July/ August SAFECOM Review:

[SAFECOM 09-0632](#): A bird struck the left wing of an airplane, which was on a return route to Albuquerque after an air attack mission. The strike resulted in a dent between the leading edge and the rivet line on the wing.

This is the second bird-strike incident in the region this year; it is appropriate to review the [Accident Prevention Bulletin IAAPB 09-03](#) from April 13, 2009, pertaining to Bird Strike Avoidance.

[SAFECOM 09-0655](#): During cruise flight at 14,500 feet with the autopilot engaged in heading mode, the aircraft entered an uncommanded turn to the right. The pilot tried different commands to correct the action, such as hitting the autopilot disconnect button on the yolk and the autopilot button on the console with no effect. Fortunately, the pilot overpowered the autopilot and returned the aircraft to straight and level flight; however, he lost about 400 feet on altitude. Because the aileron servo suddenly disengaged, and once the pilot was able to maneuver the aircraft normally, he decided to return to Albuquerque.

The pilot submitted the SAFECOM so that other King Air pilots would have this information should they experience something similar. Since autopilots can malfunction from time to time, it's a good practice to review the various ways to disconnect the autopilot. The pilot also made the right choice to bring the aircraft back to Albuquerque immediately.



[SAFECOM 09-0662](#): While the pilot of an airtanker was waiting on the runway for another airtanker to exit, he adjusted his left engine so it was running lean to keep the engine from loading-up. The tower cleared the airtanker for takeoff, but the pilot failed to re-adjust the mixture on the left engine. Consequently, shortly after takeoff at approximately 200 feet Above Ground Level (AGL), the pilot experienced backfiring which forced him to jettison his load. After identifying the problem to be in the left engine, he shut the engine down and returned safely to base.

The pilot is commended for two things: (1) he chose to jettison the load immediately rather than trying to troubleshoot the issue while climbing, and (2) for taking responsibility for his mistake with the fuel mixture of the left engine. This is a testament to his dedication to increasing the safety culture of our aviation program. It is easy to lose focus of the basics in our dynamic operational environment.

[SAFECOM 09-0663](#): While performing a leadplane mission, a pilot experienced a near miss with a helitanker. The pilot was on the base leg of a right hand pattern to perform a retardant drop when the helicopter appeared to have “drifted” in front of the leadplane. This situation highlights the need for all aircraft to maintain situational awareness of the Fire Traffic Area (FTA) and of other aircraft operating in the vicinity. It also emphasizes the value of every pilot paying attention and helping to create the safest environment possible by querying the other aircraft when he or she perceives a possible unsafe situation.

Airspace issues and near mid-air collisions have been a real problem this fire season. It is important that our incident aircraft keep a focus on the expected aircraft working within the FTA as well as unexpected “intruders”.

**24-Hour Aircraft Accident
Reporting Hot Line**

1-888-4MISHAP

or

1-888-464-7427

Accident:

On July 17, a Croman SH-3H helicopter accident occurred on the Backbone Fire in Willow Creek, CA. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Preliminary Report ([WPR09TA353](#)) stated that the helicopter, during liftoff, experienced a “drooping condition.” Witnesses indicated that the helicopter then collided with the tank from which it was getting water. The helicopter banked until the main rotor blades contacted the ground; on impact, the left main landing gear sheared off, and the helicopter rolled over. Thankfully, the pilots were able to extricate themselves from the helicopter. The first pilot was taken to a local hospital for overnight observation and the second pilot received minor injuries. Fortunately, a dipsite manger was on location at the accident site, a standard practice in Region 3 for situations like these.

Rappel Accident:



On July 21, the firefighting community suffered a great loss when Tom Marovich Jr. of Haywood, CA, lost his life in a rappel accident on the Backbone Fire. Tom was 20 years of age and a Modoc National Forest employee working with the Chester Helitack Crew. He worked on an engine for two fire seasons before transferring to the Apprentice Program in 2008 as a Wildland Firefighter Apprentice. We extend our sincere condolences to Tom’s family and friends. NTSB Preliminary Report [WPR09TA356](#).

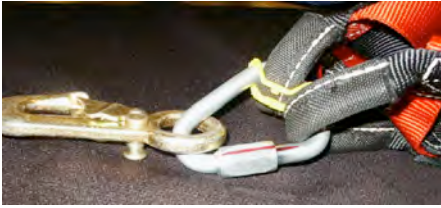
Single Engine Airtanker Accident:

Dave Jamsa was fatally injured during a Single Engine Airtanker (SEAT) crash on the Hoyt Fire. The crash happened on August 20, 34 miles northeast of Austin, NV, in the Clan Alpine Mountains. The NTSB Preliminary Report ([WPR09GA407](#)) stated, “Multiple witnesses, located both on the ground and in the air, observed the accident airplane as it approached the designated drop area from the south. Their accounts described the airplane approaching the drop area but not releasing its load of retardant. Shortly thereafter, the airplane made contact with rising terrain within the saddle area. The airplane continued uphill, while still in contact with the ground, and headed towards a crest where the terrain dropped away. The airplane then departed the end of the crest, descended, and collided with terrain in the valley area below.” Our thoughts and prayers go out to Dave’s family and friends.

Safety Alert:

Three Safety Alerts were issued in July and August:

[Safety Alert FS 09-01](#) advised all rappel units to review the [Interagency Helicopter Rappel Guide](#) (IHRG) Chapter 3, Rappel Equipment to assure that all rappel equipment meets the current standards and to review Lesson Plan 7, Helicopter Mock-up on pages D-12 through D-16 of the IHRG. All R3 rappel crews have complied with this alert.



[Safety Alert FS 09-02](#) wanted rappellers to immediately discontinue the practice of opening the Maillon Rapide tri-link on the HR-2 rappel harness for any purpose other than (1) changing a defective Forgecraft or Bourdon snap hook or (2) replacing the rubber O-ring/Kong Clip that secures the right soft loop to the right corner of the tri-link. All R3 rappel crews have complied with this alert.

[Safety Alert IA 09-04](#) addressed an inadvertent release of the primary anchor (cargo hook); a situation that occurred during a human external load evolution.

It is critical to take the time to review all of the Safety Alerts issued this month. Even if individuals do not rappel, the Region 3 Aviation Safety Group encourages people to read the Safety Alerts to get a better understanding of all aviation operations.

Accident Prevention Bulletin:

[Accident Prevention Bulletin IA 09-07](#) addresses the effects that fatigue can have on individuals (see [Interagency Safety Alert 08-02](#)). The National Transportation Board (NTSB) has cited fatigue (aircrew as well as aircraft maintainer) as a significant contributing factor in aviation accidents and has included it on their Most Wanted List of actions needed by federal agencies. Managers at every level should ensure that every precaution is taken and that proper risk management is used to mitigate the effects of fatigue. An excellent brief on fatigue and fatigue management by the Missoula Technology and Development Center is found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/training/fatigue/fatigue.ppt>.

Aviation Lessons Learned Website:

The Lessons Learned Center has added an Aviation page to the website. The site states, "It is the mission of these webpages to facilitate the sharing of information between all aviation users for the purpose of promoting a learning culture and to enhance and sustain safe and effective work practices. The content and organization has been inspired by the main components of the Safety Management Systems (SMS). The resources provided are grouped into the areas of Promoting Safety, Assuring Safety, Risk Management, and Policy to reflect those four pillars." We encourage individuals to visit the Lessons Learned website at www.wildfirelessons.net/Additional.aspx?Page=177 and to utilize the information offered.

Questions?

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, please contact Jami Anzalone, Regional Aviation Safety Manager at 505.842.3351 or Aaron Schoolcraft, Aviation Management Specialist at 505.842.3354.

