

# Safety FIRST...

## everything else second

By Keith Johnson, ALEA Safety Program Manager

*The primary goal of the Safety First Program is to eliminate accidents, and several objectives have been established to achieve this goal. The first objective is to bring focus to safety as the most important issue in everything we do. To that end, this issue of Air Beat has safety as its theme.*

The Safety First Program has as a second objective to track and to disseminate information on accident causal factors. This information can be obtained on the ALEA website in the Safety Section. In looking at accident records dating back to 1999, there has been a gradual reduction of total accidents in law enforcement aviation, but there is much more to be done if we are to eliminate accidents. Look at the following primary causes of accidents and focus your safety efforts accordingly.

CHART 1

### Primary Causes of Law Enforcement Aviation Accidents 1999 – 2006\*

#	Cause
A: 47	-Loss of Control(40%) 6-IMC
B: 24	-Engine Failure(20%)**
C: 17	-Autotantation Training
D: 12	-OtherMechanical Failure(10%***
E: 7	-CFIT
F: 5	-OtherEmergency Procedure Training
G: 3	-Fuel Starvation
H: 2	-Other
I: 2	-Wire Strike
J: 1	-BirdStrike
K: 1	-Fuel Contamination
L: 1	-Training(steep approach)****

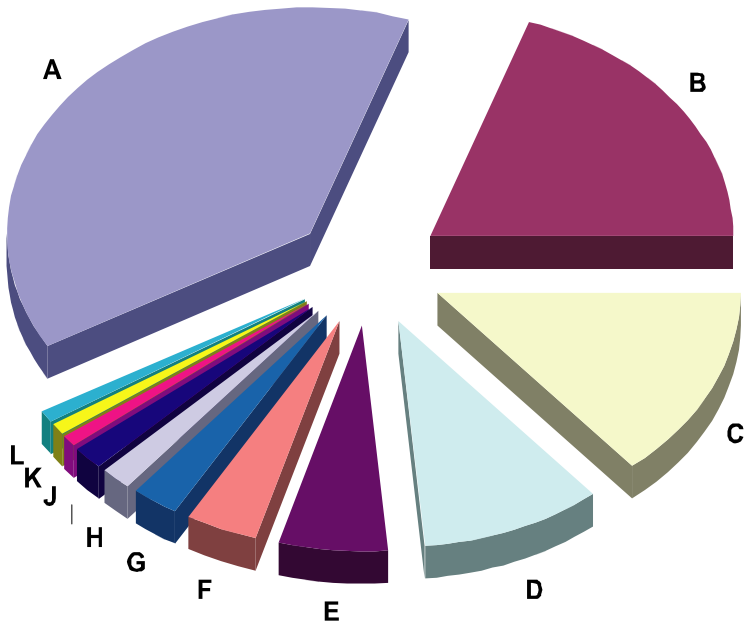


CHART 2

### Aircraft Type in Accidents & Injuries , 1999-2006\*

**Helicopter: 93**  
**Fixed-Wing: 28**  

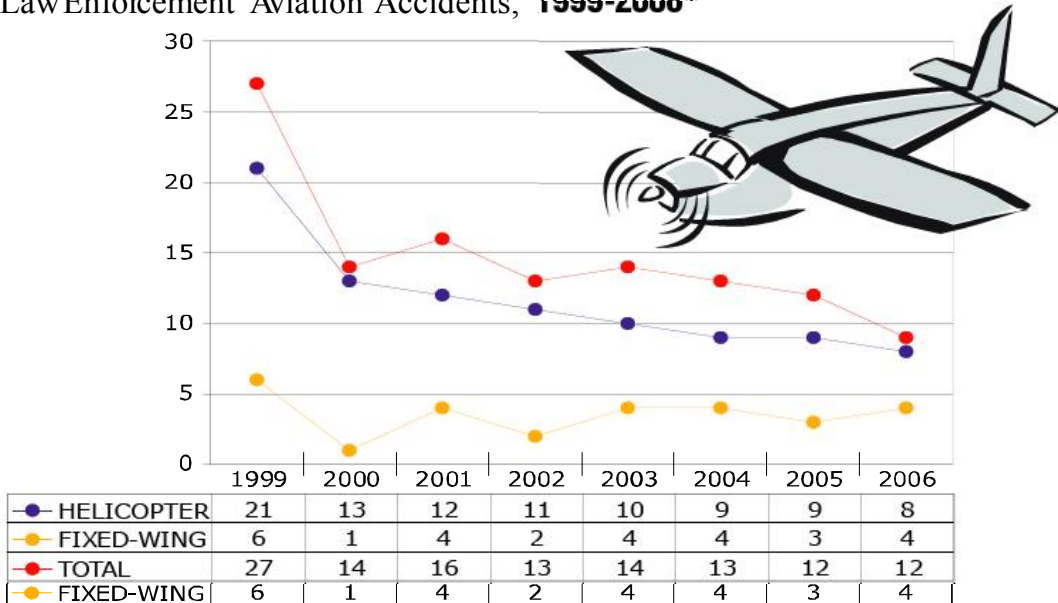

---

**TOTAL:121**  
Helicopters are all single-engine.

	Minor	Serious	Fatal
Helicopter	45	30	20
Fixed-Wing	10	7	6
Total	65	37	26
<b>TOTAL INJURIES</b>			<b>128</b>

CHART 3

Law Enforcement Aviation Accidents, 1999-2006\*



The third objective is to take proactive steps to eliminate accidents. And, for those organizations that have not had a recent accident, you must continue to find new and better ways to manage risk. None of us can put up our feet, thinking that the job is done. If you are not moving ahead, you are falling behind.

Training is one of ALEA's proactive efforts that eliminates accidents, and it is what ALEA is about. It is one of the most important things we do to make our job safer, more effective and efficient, while bringing professionalism to our industry.

When most of us entered law enforcement aviation, we had very limited, if any, aviation experience. Training is the only substitute for experience. We often hear the comment that training is too expensive. If you think training is expensive, try having an accident. It's a matter of "pay me now or pay me later" – the latter is much more expensive.

ALEA is dedicated to providing the finest training available to its members. ALEA's commitment to safety is demonstrated by providing a three-day training course for unit managers during the annual ALEA conference at no charge. We wish to thank the affiliate member companies in our industry that sponsor and support these training courses at six regional safety seminars and one annual international conference throughout the year. These include FLIR, which sponsors the Advanced Thermal Imaging Course, American Eurocopter for the Tactical Flight Officer Course, Bell Helicopter for the Unit Manager Course; Flight Safety for the Safety Course, Bell Helicopter for the NVG Course and FDC-WECO for the IA Renewal Course.

The Safety First Program adheres to the following safety principles that provide the foundation for managing risk:

- Always operate in the safest manner possible.
- Never take unnecessary risks.
- Safe does not mean risk free.
- The key to safety is the identification and management of risk.

Most law enforcement aviation accidents occur as a result of human error and loss of control. Many accidents occur due to a mistaken belief that the urgency of accomplishing the mission is most important and that inordinately high risk-taking is acceptable. It is not. This must stop. Accidents must not be accepted as a normal cost of doing business.

In our efforts to eliminate accidents, ALEA has partnered with the International Helicopter Safety Team (IHST) to eliminate helicopter accidents worldwide by 80 percent over the next 10 years. (Please read the article by Matt Zuccaro for details on this most important effort.)

The Safety First Program utilizes safety posters to bring attention to human factors. The posters have recurring themes that address judgment and action errors that are at the source of most accidents. We face several pitfalls that must be considered in risk management, including:

- Rationalizing the importance of accomplishing the mission.

- Underestimating the risks associated with performing the mission.
- Overestimating our flying skills.
- Failing to follow standards, including organization policy and procedures, the aircraft flight manual, and the Federal Aviation Regulations.

These constitute judgment errors. This mentality is at the root of loss of control accidents, and we are all subject to making such mistakes. So, what is the problem, and what are you going to do about it? Please join ALEA and the International Helicopter Safety Team in our efforts to eliminate accidents.

The Safety First Program is all-inclusive. It invites everyone's input and participation. Send your comments and requests to [safety@alea.org](mailto:safety@alea.org). Safety First is here for you, so get on board by keeping safety as your first priority.

**Sidebar:**

The ALEA Flight Safety Recognition Program honors flight crews who have significant accident and violation free law enforcement mission flight hours.

- Bronze Level • 1,500 Hours
- Silver Level • 2,500 Hours
- Gold Level • 3,500 Hours
- Platinum Level • 5,000 Hours

ALEA members, qualified in the aircraft crew position and assigned as aircrew members by their unit to a police agency directed mission (tactical or otherwise), are allowed to use all of the time flown towards receiving an ALEA Flight Safety Recognition Program certificate. To apply, complete an application form (found under the safety section of [www.alea.org](http://www.alea.org)) and return it to the ALEA office marked, "Attention: ALEA Safety Committee."

PLEASE NOTE: ANY accident or violation, regardless of nature or circumstances, will disqualify the candidate. Certificate requirements do not include military flight time.