



2005-April : Newsletter

UNIT MANAGER COURSE – By Line Richard Bray

ALEA has made great progress since the 2004 Annual Conference. The ALEAC standards have been posted for review. The Safety First program is running full speed and one of the major goals of the program will be realized at the 2005 Annual Conference in Reno, Nevada. This year unit OIC's and managers will be able to attend the Unit Manager Course FREE. This is an excellent course (I am a graduate myself) and introduces Unit Managers to the nuances and specifics of supervision or starting an aviation program. There are only 15 spaces left. ALEA will also waive the conference registration fee. This is a \$420.00 value, so get your registration in. Call or email Sherry Hadley to take advantage of this special offer at: shadley@alea.org or 918-599-0705.

SAFETY FIRST POSTERS

We have had several requests for additional Safety First posters. We have plenty. Just email or call Sherry Hadley at the ALEA Corporate Office at: shadley@alea.org, and tell her how many you would like. This is a great way to put a fresh face on safety in your unit.

ALEAC STANDARDS

I wish to thank those members who took the time to share their comments with the commission. After review by our members the past two months, the commission will be meeting to finalize the standards for presentation to the ALEA board of directors at the 2005 Annual Conference in Reno.

LOSS OF VISUAL REFERENCE

The safety theme for this month is Loss of Visual Reference. Loss of visual reference is often followed by spatial disorientation and loss of control of the aircraft. From 1999-2004, loss of control has accounted for nearly 60% of law enforcement aviation accidents, and spatial disorientation continues to have the highest fatality rate. Changes in environmental conditions can occur multiple times on a given flight. External conditions such as clouds, fog, haze, smoke, rain and low-light conditions reduce our ability to avoid things like mountains, surface obstructions, terrain and water.

The keys to avoiding inadvertent IMC are training, knowledge, skill, judgment and flight planning. In the event of experiencing inadvertent IMC, several things should be considered including steps to prevent/overcome spatial disorientation:

- Have and follow your inadvertent IMC plan – Do you have one?
- Fly on and believe the flight instruments
- Utilize a sound instrument scan
- Fly straight and level if possible until you are oriented
- Avoid unnecessary and rapid head movements and abrupt control inputs
- Avoid fixation that can cause disorientation

Over-water operations can be challenging. Rapid and/or steep turns and head movements should be avoided, especially during low-light conditions. We become comfortable making such movements because normally nothing happens. However, when you combine these conditions, risk goes up exponentially, often with deadly consequences. During these conditions, slow down, make gradual control inputs and give yourself some additional altitude when possible.

Most of us in law enforcement operate with crews of two. Your partner can be a valuable asset in making the transition from visual to instrument flight, and can help in becoming oriented. This can include monitoring instruments and giving the pilot essential information, and communicating with ATC and other nearby aircraft. Effective response requires training for both pilot and tactical flight officer. I frequently hear, "Its too expensive to train." If you think training is expensive, try having a fatal accident. Managers, chiefs of police and sheriffs must be informed and educated so they understand that training is not a luxury, it's essential.

There are multiple environments that crews must be prepared to operate in, including marine, dessert, mountains, agricultural and urban areas with high-rise buildings and other surface obstacles. In order to increase the likelihood of responding appropriately, pilots and crewmembers need to have a plan for the different environmental conditions in which they operate, and make allowances for a changing environment.

In evaluating these accidents, the one element we often neglect to address is the role and responsibilities of supervision and management. We supervisors need to monitor weather conditions. When ceiling and/or visibility are low, give careful consideration whether to have your people flying. It's our responsibility to manage risk through proper supervision.

While inadvertent IMC is a very high-risk situation, it does not have to be fatal as is too often the case. Remember, the key to prevention of inadvertent entry into IMC requires good risk management, including flight planning, decision-making and CRM. Disorientation can be insidious, and has the highest fatality rate of all accident causal factors. Don't fall into this trap.

So far this year we have had only one accident. Keep up the good work. Until next month, remember ...

Remember – Safety First!

Keith Johnson

Safety Program Manager