



May 26, 2021

Critical Safety Message from NAAREF President Matt Hovdenes

It is with a somber heart that I write this. As you may have heard or read, our industry has had five fatal accidents this year so far in the United States. Many have commented that that number is way too many for this part of the season. For those who lost a father, husband or son, even one is far too high. Personally, this number hit me hard last week, and NAAREF feels the need to offer further safety guidance to our industry to help improve our safety and professionalism. In the coming weeks, you will start seeing some different tools provided to the industry to help support a culture of safety and professionalism.

I cannot stress enough that being safe is ultimately up to you. YOU need to choose to be safe and to hold those around you to that standard.

While we don't have any final investigation results, the fatal accidents this year appear to consist of four Controlled Flight Into Terrain (CFIT) accidents, all of which involved wires as the object hit, and one suspected stall/spin accident. Initial reports indicate that three of the five pilots involved had relatively low experience in the industry, while two of them were highly experienced.

As I said earlier, it all starts with you and your mindset. Think about what it is you can do to help you and your staff be safe. Maybe it's revisiting old training content or encouraging everyone to slow down a little. Whatever it is you chose to do, take action now. One thing I encourage all of you to do is to take one to five minutes every day and have a meeting at your operation to think about how you will be safe that day. You can call it a safety briefing, a huddle or just a daily meeting where the day's plans are discussed.

NAAREF also has materials to assist. Take a look at the online tools we have, like the [Wires and Obstructions](#) video posted on NAAA's website. Also new this summer, NAAREF will be hosting an online safety session that will be live via Zoom this Monday, May 31, at 20:00 CST. It will be less than 30 minutes and will feature a panel discussion on some different safety ideas and issues that can be addressed in-season. I encourage all of you to watch this and get your staff and fellow pilots to watch it and have discussions about it. If you miss it live, don't worry—we will put it on the NAAA website for future viewing. Please use it as a tool to help YOU maintain an active role in your operation's and our industry's safety. [Use this link](#) (Passcode: 326138) for access to the safety session on Monday, May 31 at 20:00

CST. Please feel free to share with others.

I leave you now with the names of the pilots we have lost this season. If you do only one thing, take a long look at these names and remember that they, like you, just went to work. They, like you, have families and co-workers who care a great deal about them. They, like you, were probably great pilots. Please pray for the families and co-workers of these pilots, and let's stop the number at five this year.

Carl L. Hill, LA: 68

Nick Frost, GA: 26

David Montague, VA: 57

Jakob Porter, LA: 22

Ripson Wong, KS: 47

Make it a Safe Day

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Hovdenes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Matt Hovdenes

2021 NAAREF President