

If You're Too Sick To Fly, You're Too Sick To Sim



*Tim Baker (PIT)
Chairman, Training Committee*

That phrase at the top of this article is deceptively simple, but could possibly be the most important advice you receive in your career. If you wake up barfing one morning with the flu, there is little chance that you would put your fevered, retching body in an airplane full of passengers and fly from A to B. This is a good thing. Use your sick time to get well and keep your cooties to yourself!

Most of you are thinking, "So, we shouldn't fly if we're sick. Well duh, Tim, next thing you'll be telling us is that the sun is hot." I don't mean to state the obvious. But over the holidays we worked with several pilots who were forced to deal with personal issues of both a physical and emotional nature that made it impossible for them to successfully complete their training. We (the Training Department and ALPA's Training/Aero-medical committees) were able to get these pilots the attention they needed to get back on their feet. But what situations would require this level of cooperation to solve?

Without going into too many details, a couple of the pilots were just sicker than they first thought and couldn't finish their training program. No problem; just a call to the Flight Manager or the Training Committee got the ball rolling to get these pilots out of training until they got well. Other pilots' situations were more complicated, but the solution as far as training was concerned remained the same: stop the training and start the sick leave. The situations that caused these pilots so much trouble involved family members. Illness and conflict involving a family member can make it impossible to

successfully complete training. Let someone know what's going on, (preferably before a checkride) so action can be taken to protect you. The training record you save may be your own!

Now, for a little perspective: My purpose here is not to encourage an increase in sick usage in training just for the heck of it. Sick usage in training creates a scheduling nightmare and inconveniences the pilot scheduled to take training with you. So don't use sick time just to get out of a training session because of inconvenient scheduling. Use sick time to get out of training if you are sick or under serious stress induced by family matters. Call someone and use your sick time!

Now let's talk about how to call in sick for training sessions. During normal business hours (9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Time), simply call the Flight Manager for your equipment and let them know what's up. To reach your Flight Manager, simply call the same toll-free number you use to call Crew Scheduling (800-872-7456) and use prompts 1-9-2 and then listen for your equipment type. If the secretary answers the call, give her the particulars and she'll make sure that the word gets to the proper sim instructor. If you're calling after hours, you have to get a little more creative and call the respective guard at the sim building. For CLT call 704-359-2612. For PIT call 412-472-7902. The guard will let your instructor know who to pass the word to. Obviously the earlier you can pass the word on to someone about illness or personal conflict, the better chance there is to

“So don't use sick time just to get out of a training session because of inconvenient scheduling. Use sick time to get out of training if you are sick or under serious stress induced by family matters.”

“If you come in for a “non-jeopardy” LOFT without preparing and don’t know your memory items, don’t know your limitations or don’t know your callouts, guess what: you’re not going to pass the “non-jeopardy” LOFT!”

reschedule someone into your slot and keep the training going for the other pilot already in the sim. So by all means, if it is at all possible avoid the last-minute cancellation of a sim or training session.

But above all remember this: If you’re too sick to fly, you’re too sick to sim!

More LOFT stuff

This column has printed reams of material on the proper way to prepare for a visit to the simulator. With all of that material out there on the topic of checkrides I would be risking putting all of you asleep with a rehash of the subject. But recent events compel me to clarify the LOFT event in the simulator.

But first of all, this quick quiz. Answer with a show of hands. How many of you think that a LOFT is a “non-jeopardy” event? OK. How many of you think that “non-jeopardy” means there is no risk? Ouch. Lastly and most impor-

tantly, how many of you think that “non-jeopardy” means that there is no need to prepare before coming in for a LOFT? Be honest. Hold those hands up high.

I was afraid of that.

But I’m not surprised, since we’ve heard about some pretty ugly LOFTs recently. So let’s clear this up right now. If you come in for a “non-jeopardy” LOFT without preparing and don’t know your memory items, don’t know your limitations or don’t know your callouts, guess what: you’re not going to pass the “non-jeopardy” LOFT! And frankly, without the basics, how can you expect to pass?

Now before you head to the word processor to zap a letter to the editor asking, “What about the training Tim?” remember this: There is basic information we all are required to know every day we put the uniform on and fly the line. We need to know this information for the simulator too: every sim, including those “non-jeopardy” LOFTs. In order to get to the training, we all have to demonstrate our knowledge in these basic, fundamental areas of knowledge.

Bottom line? Prepare for the LOFT the same as you would prepare for a PC.

New Year’s resolutions

If you’re anything like me, you make New Year’s resolutions. And if you’re anything like me, your resolutions implode around January 15. So I find that the key to not breaking a New Year’s resolution is to not make them in the first place or make them so ridiculously easy that I can’t help but keep them. So as a public service, let me offer you a ridiculously easy resolution that is simple to keep. Here it is: Clean up your cockpit when you leave.

Make a resolution to pick up any half-empty water bottles, bread crumbs on the console, spilled liquids, used Kleenex and used utensils when you leave. I know it’s easy to get rushed and leave stuff behind, especially when we have a computer that makes it mandatory to change airplanes at any station that boards more than 2,198 passengers per month. But try to remember to clean up when you leave. It’s a little thing but one that will be appreciated by your fellow pilots. And makes for an easy New Year’s resolution to keep!

See you in school!

