

All About CFIT-ALAR

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In 1996, the Flight Safety Foundation (FSF) commissioned an Approach and Landing Accident Reduction (ALAR) Task Force. This was a follow-on study to its previous Controlled Flight Into Terrain (CFIT) Task Force.

CFIT is the largest single accident group in terms of hull losses. Approach and landing (ALA) accidents, a subset of CFIT, are the largest group in terms of fatalities. ALPA Safety Committee members, including several from US Airways, have played a major role in both the CFIT and ALAR task forces.

The final report of the ALAR Task Force was published by the FSF in November 1998. This special report was entitled "Killers in Aviation." The report was based on data collected from studying 286 fatal approach and landing accidents worldwide, accounting for 7,185 fatalities, and an in depth study of 76 accidents and incidents from line audits of over 3,000 flights.

One of the conclusions of this report states: "Unstabilized and rushed approaches contribute to Approach and Landing Accidents." The report goes on to recommend that operators should include parameters in their Flight Operations Manuals defining stabilized approaches. These parameters should include: "intended flight path, speed, power settings, attitude, sink rate, and configuration."

Does that sound familiar? It should! Paragraph 5.10.8 of the US Airways Flight Operations Manual defines a stabilized approach at 1,000 feet AFE in IMC, or 500 feet in VMC as

being on speed, on glide path, at a constant rate of descent, spooled up, in landing configuration, and in trim. If not stabilized, GO AROUND. The FSF goes one step further and adds "crew readiness," which is defined as having all briefing and checklists accomplished.

Why, you might ask, is so much being said about stabilized approaches? Here are some facts from the report.

FACT: Being low and/or slow was a factor in 35 percent of the accidents.

FACT: Being too fast and/or too high occurred in 30 percent of the accidents.

FACT: "Press-on-itis," defined as continuing an approach when conditions suggest otherwise, was identified as a factor in 42 percent of the accidents.

Stop and ask yourself how many times you have either heard of or had first hand knowledge of a long landing or runway overshoot? How many times have you tried to salvage a messed up approach? Here is another fact from the report:

FACT: Poor professional judgment/airmanship was the most often cited causal factor in these accidents, occurring 74 percent of the time.

We have all done things that later had us wondering, Why did I do that? Personally, I figure that if I have my First Officer so scared that he/she is able to overcome his/her natural awe at my superlative abilities as an airman extraordinaire to say that something does not look right, then maybe I should GO AROUND.

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If I go around, I then have another chance to do it right and settle down my shook-up F/O.

Another fact from the report:

FACT: Failure in CRM is a causal factor in 63 percent of approach and landing accidents.

This usually reflects a breakdown in crew coordination and the process of monitoring/challenging errors.

If you are the PF, when you recognize you are not in a stabilized condition at the 1,000 foot or 500 foot point, GO AROUND. You then have more time to settle down and get it right the next time. If you are the PNF and something

does not look right, it is your job to say so. Say it loudly and repeat it loudly until the PF hears you and goes around.

You have the guidance from the FOM, and now you have some facts surrounding approach and landing accidents. With that knowledge in hand, do not make the mistake of completing an unstabilized approach to the resulting accident or incident. Simply GO AROUND.

