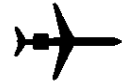


Good Enough?

by Jerry E. Tobias



Aviation is a demanding and often unforgiving industry. The standard effort required by everyone involved will always be defined by the words “*thorough, exact and precise.*” We have all heard phrases, though, like “good enough,” or “close enough for government work,” or “it’s no big deal” used within the aviation environment. Saying things like that is one thing; believing that they are true, however, is a serious mistake.

A mentality that settles for “good enough” or accepts “close enough” responses does not belong in the management office, the flight planning room, the maintenance hangar or the cockpit. Unfortunately, though, such thinking does occasionally occur.

Why? One reason is complacency. When complacent people are hurried, pushed or otherwise inconvenienced, they often relax their standards and consent to short cuts and omissions. And what’s worse, each time a deviation is “survived,” that non-standard practice moves one step closer to becoming a person’s (or crew’s, or company’s) “standard operating procedure.”

Complacency often begins subtly and appears rather benign: “We’re running late; I’ll look into it after we’re airborne.” Left unchecked, though, it can escalate and eventually contaminate sound judgment.

I used to ride on other airlines’ jump seats from Omaha to my airline crew base at LAX. During those years I was stunned to watch - more than once - as crews at a no-longer-flying airline briefed instrument approach procedures using only these exact words: “This airplane, that airport.” What an incredible example of a dangerously complacent, “it’s no big deal” attitude. Such thinking tarnishes our profession and erodes aviation safety.

But, before declaring that these attitudes could only occur in others, ask yourself:

Have you ever told an employee that “we don’t have time to worry about the little things?”

Have you ever skipped a weather briefing because you were “just going up for a short VFR hop?” Have you ever abbreviated your flight planning efforts because you were “already familiar” with the route or the destination?

Have you ever omitted reaching for the torque wrench and settled for the TFAR (“That Feels About Right”) technique instead? Have you ever completed a maintenance procedure without referring to the appropriate manual or checklist?

Have you ever noticed a slightly deflated tire or other anomaly, but flown (without actually checking it out) anyway? Have you ever allowed yourself to continue an unstabilized approach, to land off runway centerline (for no good reason), or to touch down “waaaaay too long?”

If you answered “yes” to any of the above, it might be because - at some point - you adopted a complacent, “it’s no big deal” attitude or a “good enough” mentality. The truth is, though, it really is a big deal, and “good enough” is really never good enough.

Am I suggesting, therefore, that you *guard* against complacency and *commit* to being consistently thorough and exact? Precisely! ■

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