

Gene Benson's Safety Initiative 2.0

Effective September 1, 2021

History:

Since our Safety Initiative began in 2004, we have produced books, articles, a monthly newsletter, videos, podcasts, live seminars, live webinars, online courses, and large virtual aviation safety stand downs. We have issued more than 23,000 Wings credits to our participants. We have nearly 5,000 newsletter subscribers, more than 3,200 YouTube subscribers, and we have logged more than 432,000 YouTube views. Since producing and presenting the first ever live webinar valid for Wings credit in 2009, we have produced more than 420 live webinar events of various sizes on various topics.

Mission:

Our mission is to help pilots to avoid having aircraft accidents and incidents.

Target Population:

We wish to primarily target pilots of general aviation airplanes, regardless of pilot certificates and ratings held or experience level. These pilots basically can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of pilots who have a genuine interest in being safer and who actively strive for that goal. The second group consists of pilots who are not necessarily careless or reckless but seek only to maintain minimum standards of compliance with regulations designed to maintain proficiency.

Methodology:

We provide pilots with safety information on many topics and at several levels through a variety of media. Available media platforms have evolved significantly since we first began and we have attempted to evaluate new platforms as they develop. For Safety Initiative 2.0, we intend to fine tune our safety products. For all pilots, we intend to produce more analysis of airplane crashes to target the various issues that are the most common accident causal factors. We firmly believe that most accidents are the result of the pilot's humanness, so we will stress human factors issues. We will attempt to reach more pilots through shorter, faster moving, more dynamic presentations. This is consistent with current learning theory and is highly preferred by the younger pilot population.

One downside to the shorter presentations is that they will not be eligible for Wings credit. The FAA criteria requires that any activity eligible for one Wings credit be at least one hour in length. Likewise, activities requiring 30 minutes can be eligible for ½ Wings credit. There is presently no option to issue any Wings credit for any activity that does not have a duration of at least 30 minutes.

However, we will continue to produce content that is valid for Wings credit. Our goal for Safety Initiative 2.0 is to offer quality content that will allow a pilot to earn the all the knowledge credits required for all levels of the Wings program, from Basic through Advanced and on to Masters. By making it convenient to earn all the knowledge credits necessary, we hope that pilots will also participate in our programs that are not valid for Wings credit.

We had hoped to resume participation in live, in-person events. But as of this writing, the pandemic once again threatens the viability of that. We will monitor the situation and can revise our plan as needed.

Financial

There is considerable cost associated with operating the Safety Initiative. Hosting services webinars, websites and online courses, subscription services for software, including the email service, upgrades to non-subscription software and hardware quickly add up. The cost is presently defrayed by donations from individuals, sponsorships from companies such as Avemco Insurance and Bright Spot, Inc., some fee-based activities such as the Human Factors Ground School,

and profits from the Virtual Stand Down events. These things combined cover about 60% of the total cost. The remainder of the costs are covered by Gene Benson.

We have maintained our stance that most of our products will be free to users and will also be free of advertising. Admittedly, this is an uphill climb since everyone is accustomed to everything on the internet being “free.” Of course, very little in life is truly free and most content on the internet is either a lure to acquire email addresses or other personal information or is riddled with advertising that pops up and interrupts the thought process.

Several people have suggested and we have considered forming a non-profit foundation so that contributions to our cause would be tax deductible. The cost of forming a non-profit foundation along with the additional accounting costs would probably not be covered by additional donations.

We are presently evaluating sites such as Patreon for supporters to pledge a monthly donation. We do have some supporters who have set up PayPal to automatically donate each month and we thank them for that. We are also considering other crowd funding sites for one-time projects.

However, for now, we will continue and we are grateful for the support that has been and continues to be provided.

Some initiatives presently under development:

Video Series: “Fly Like Your Life Depends on It”

Borrowing a page from the streaming video folks, we will have several “seasons” (perhaps 5). Each season will have a theme such as “Fuel Management,” “Approach Errors,” or “Night Operations.” Each season will have several episodes, perhaps 5 or 6, each featuring safety topics within the season theme. Each episode will include analysis of an accident related to the topic. These videos would have a duration of 15 to 30 minutes each. We are disappointed that YouTube no longer allows videos to be free of advertising. We had always chosen to avoid ads in our videos and we were willing to forgo the small revenue stream that might have been generated. Now, ads run as part of our videos, but we have not opted to allow additional ads for which we would receive revenue. There are other options for hosting our videos, but they are fee-based and would not likely have the reach of videos on YouTube.

“YouTube Shorts”

To be competitive with other social media platforms, YouTube has introduced a new feature called “shorts.” Videos are presented in vertical format to be viewed on smart phones and have a maximum duration of one minute. It is difficult to present anything substantial in 60 seconds, but perhaps the “shorts” can attract more pilots and they can be enticed to subscribe to our channel, thereby being notified when a new video, of any length, is released.

Live Webinars

We intend to continue producing live webinars to follow our record of success with this platform in the past. We will continue to run events of just more than 60 minutes so that one Wings credit can be issued to participants. We will monitor attendance closely since there is a plethora of aviation webinars now being offered every month by several different organizations. Webinars account for a high percentage of our Safety Initiative participants but they are also the costliest and most time-consuming part of our endeavors.

Online Courses

Our existing courses are on a platform called Teachable.” The platform is easy to use for both the course creators and for the course takers. It is also reasonable in cost. However, it is not possible to include interactions within a course. As an educator, I believe that interactivity is very important to learning. Previously, I used Articulate products to create my courses and it was easy to build interactions into the courses. With the relatively recent demise of Flash, easily hosting courses created in an Articulate product required a learning management system, or LMS. Using an LMS, either having one installed or using an online product, is prohibitively costly. Enter InstructSuite.com, an online course platform that converts a course created in PowerPoint to a format that fits their LMS. PowerPoint, through its system of links, allows

terrific interactivity to be built into a course. We joined the InstructSuite platform in the early stages of its creation and worked with the developer to express our needs. Our first course went live on InstructSuite in late August 2021 and we intend to have all our online courses on that platform by the end of the first quarter of 2022. Since we are confident that we will be able to create much more dynamic courses, so course creation will now take a higher priority.

“Vectors for Safety” Newsletter

The core of the Safety Initiative will continue to be the newsletter. The present format appears to be working so no changes in that are planned. We presently offer a blog type article on some aspect of safety and the blog is followed by one or more accident analysis that are related to the blog topic. The mailing list associated with the newsletter is our main communication portal for notifying subscribers of upcoming events.

Social Media

One area in which the need for improvement is clear is our use of social media. LinkedIn is our most used platform. Perhaps more visibility on other platforms would help us to reach more pilots. Therefore, more use of social media is a goal, though there is no plan in place to do that. Volunteer help along that line would be a great asset.

Large Virtual Stand Down Event

The large virtual stand down events appear to attract pilots who do not otherwise engage in safety events. We have produced and conducted two large virtual stand down events and doing an additional one in 2022 is a possibility. They are immensely time consuming and have substantial production cost but have been extremely well received in the past. Revenue obtained from sponsors covered the cost of the events and made a modest contribution to the overall cost of running the safety initiative.

Aging Pilots Initiative

It is no secret that the pilot population is aging. At some point, every pilot will reach a point at which it is no longer safe to fly as pilot-in-command. The extremely difficult task is to determine when a pilot has reached that point. It is certainly not determined by the calendar alone. But equally important as determining when a pilot should no longer fly is finding ways to extend a pilot's time as a safe and competent pilot. There are ways in which accurate evaluation and effective preventative measures can be taken. We are presently working hard on this project and hope to be able to offer something substantial by the end of the first quarter 2022.