

# Interagency Aviation Accident Prevention Bulletin



No. IA APB 25-04

September 8, 2025

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**Subject:** Aircraft Cockpit Video and Data Recorders

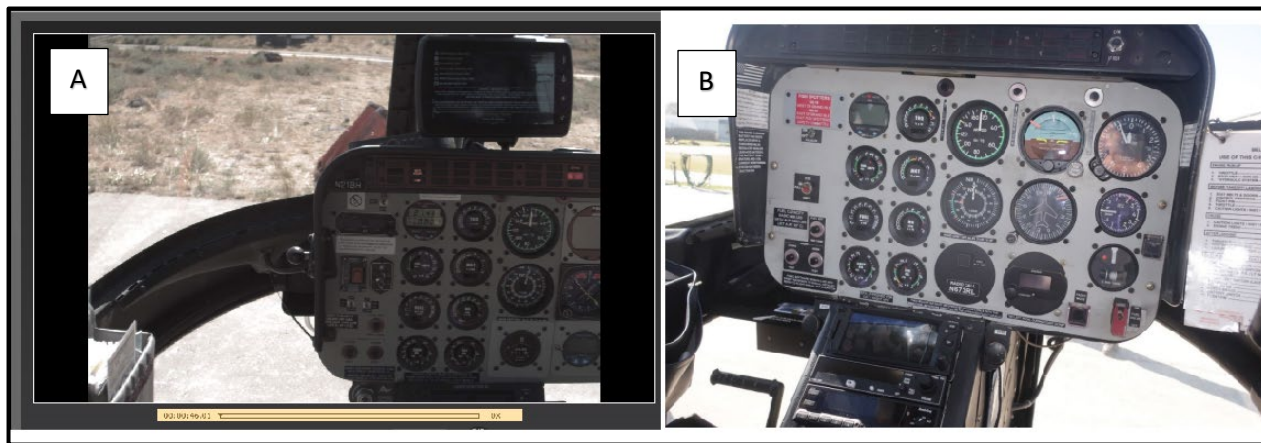
**Area of Concern:** Maintenance of Aircraft Cockpit Video Recorders and Data Utilization

**Distribution:** All Aviation Activities

**Discussion:** The addition of Flight Data Monitoring (FDM) systems and video recorders in recent US Forest Service and DOI Aviation service contracts is relatively new.

Many benefits have resulted from the use of cockpit recording devices. In addition to providing key, critical data supporting accident investigations they also contribute to safer and more efficient aviation operations by providing similar data for training. FDM systems enable specific areas to be targeted to enhance pilot (and crew) performance through operational monitoring. They can also aid in maintenance diagnostics.

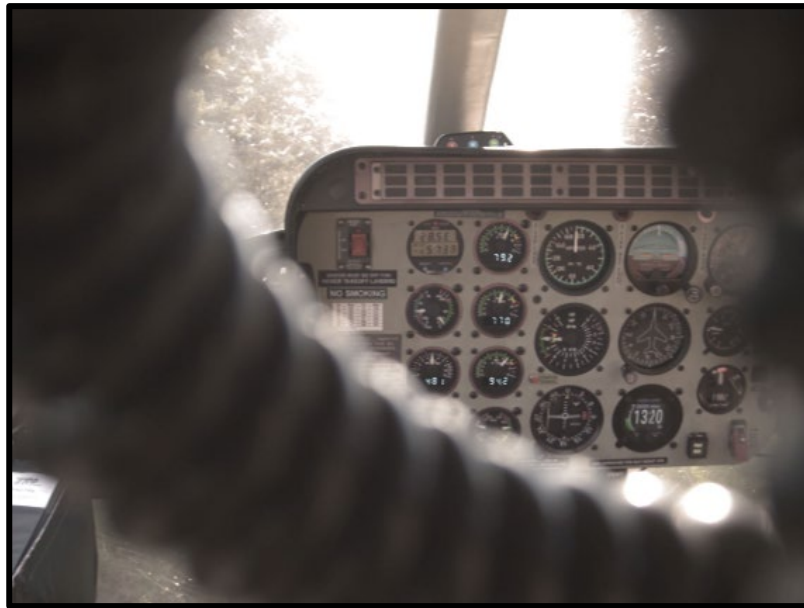
In several recent incidents where cockpit recording devices were installed, investigators found that the cameras were misaligned or obstructed. Figure 1A shows the subject aircraft recording device was misaligned. Figure 1B demonstrates a properly installed camera capturing the entire instrument panel.



**Figure 1** Image on the left does not capture the whole instrument panel compared to the one on the right.

Analog aircraft (without FDM devices installed) should ensure that the focal length is set correctly and that the camera covers the entire instrument panel. Cameras are often accidentally moved by crew or disturbed through vibration over time necessitating periodic inspection to ensure it remains properly focused in the right area.

Figure 2 shows how the camera's view of the instrument panel can be obscured by a simple intercom cable.



**Figure 2. Image blocked by intercom cable.**

In addition to camera aiming and field of view, the data being collected on these devices should also be checked and verified.

Like any aircraft equipment, these types of recording devices require maintenance to ensure they are working properly. Additionally, the data they capture needs to be downloaded and analyzed in order to extract the valuable feedback that can be used to improve performance.

What else can be done?

- Ensure the recording device is securely mounted, focal length set, and is set to avoid interference or distraction/distortion.
- Check to make sure that the view encompasses both the instrument panel and partial outside viewing for optimal recording and learning potential.
- Review recordings for training flight reviews and to identify areas of improvement. Integrate cameras with FDM.
- Ensure intercom and ambient cockpit audio is being recorded.
- Many newer recording devices offer an easy method to download both video and other post-flight data.

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