



Department of the Interior Aviation Safety Alert



No. DOI 08-01

September 12, 2008

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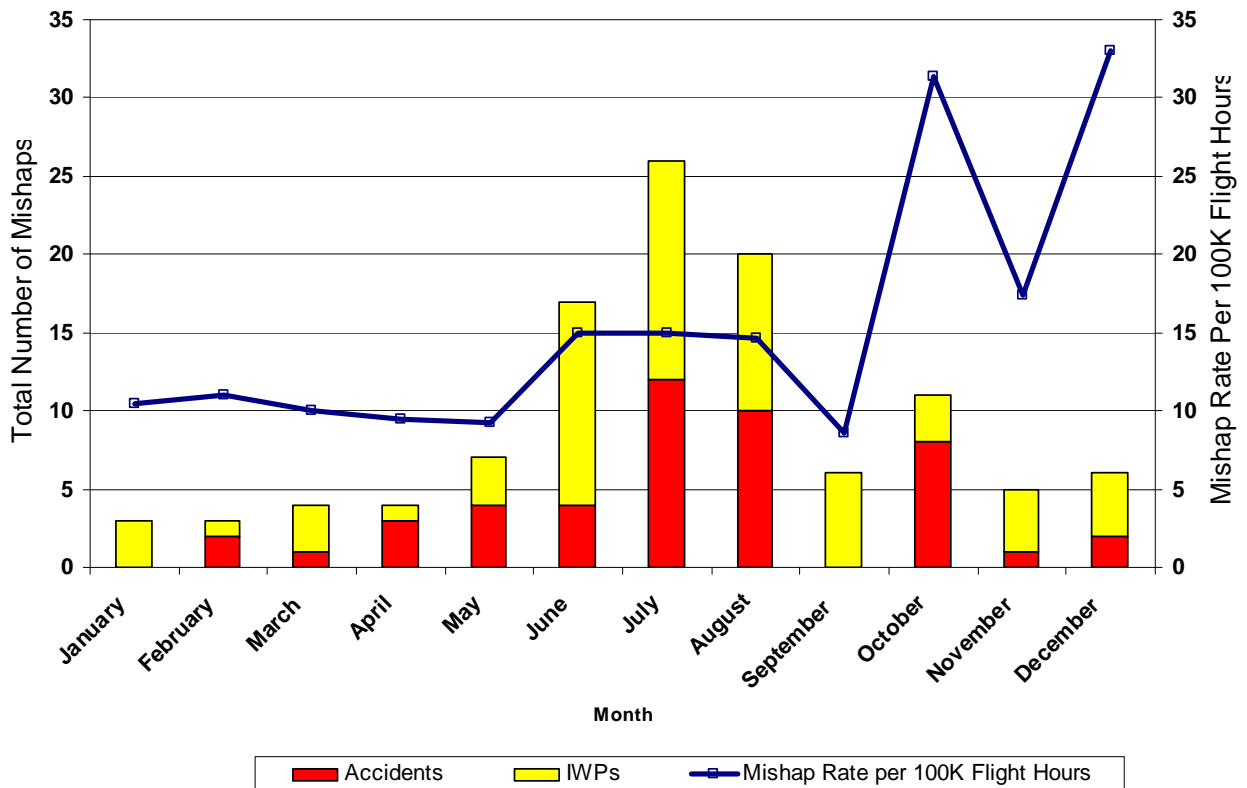
Subject: HISTORIC FLIGHT OPERATIONS / MISHAPS BY MONTH

Area of Concern: Aircraft Mishap Rates by Month

Distribution: All Aviation Users

Discussion: Ask anyone if they know which two months have the highest mishap [accident and Incident-With-Potential (IWP)] rates and they'll probably say July and August. The answer to that question appears to be intuitively obvious. After all, the fire season is in full swing and operational tempo is usually at its peak. However, when you look at DOI's mishap data from 1999 to 2008 (as shown in the chart below), the two months with the highest mishap rates are actually October and December. The DOI mishap rates in these two months are 160% - 173% **HIGHER** than the average rate of the remaining ten months.

DOI Mishaps between 1999-2008 by Month



Subject: HISTORIC FLIGHT OPERATIONS / ACCIDENTS BY MONTH

Now remember, we're talking about mishap rates, not the number of mishaps. A mishap rate is defined as the number of mishaps (accidents and IWPs) per 100,000 flight hours. Looking at the chart again, you'll see that October, while having the second highest mishap rate, also ranks fourth in the total number of mishaps during the 10-year period.

So why does October and December have the highest mishap rates? While there are many reasons, the following explanations are offered (please feel free to send us your ideas as to why mishap rates in these two months are the highest in your area).

1. October is the first month of the new fiscal year. The end of year wrap-up is complete and there is finally "new" money (or at least a continuing resolution) for the flight program. The fire season is over and winter is not far away (in the L48) so there's a "sense of urgency" to complete those missions that require aviation resources (the perfect scenario for abbreviated flight planning and complacency to creep in).
2. December is a month with little flight activity. It's a month of "use or lose" annual leave. Everyone is focused on holiday festivities as opposed to flying. Because of the low flight hours generated in December (remember mishap rates are defined as the number of mishaps per 100,000 flight hours), one mishap will cause the mishap rate to skyrocket.

Recommendations: Aviation Program Managers and Aviation Safety Managers should brief this Safety Alert to all aircrew and aviation users. For everyone in aviation, be on guard, be vigilant, and don't overlook attention to detail in your mission planning and execution.

By eliminating mishaps during the first quarter (25%) of each fiscal year, we can reduce the risk of a mishap by **44%** and be well on our way to achieving zero mishaps. Everyone must work together to make the first quarter of FY09 accident free.

/s/ Robert Galloway
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