

# Jumpseat

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## Keep Learning

Seneca — the venerable Roman philosopher, not the venerable Piper-built twin — once offered some good advice about life: “As long as you live, keep learning how to live.” Given what I do for a living these days as director of the FAA’s Flight Standards Service, I’d like to reframe that advice a little: *As long as you fly, keep learning how to fly.* If there is anything I have learned about aviation and good airmanship in more than thirty years as a pilot, instructor, and evaluator, it is that a good pilot never stops being a student of all the lessons and opportunities that aviation has to offer. That’s why this issue of *FAA Safety Briefing* focuses on the wide world of flying.

### Lifelong Learning

In the last issue, I wrote about my vision to establish a U.S. National Aviation Academy that would attract, train, and mentor the best and brightest of our youth. Part of the goal is to address pilot retention issues and support the vital U.S. aviation sector’s role in our national economy. A more fundamental goal, though, is to enhance safety and airmanship by instilling a core commitment to continued learning. And because lifelong learning is key to a long life in flying, we specifically need to teach our pilots *how* to keep learning.

Let me stress that the lifelong learning goal is not confined to the vision of a U.S. National Aviation Academy. On the contrary, one of my job priorities is to find ways to ensure that our flight training certification standards produce competent, confident, skilled, well-rounded pilots who are fully prepared to assume command of their aircraft in all situations.

There are a number of things we’re already doing to advance that goal. As you may know from reading the news, congressional passage of Public Law 111-216, commonly known as the Airline Safety and Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act of 2010, requires the FAA to establish a number of new standards for pilot training, as well as develop best practices for pilot professionalism and professional development.

In addition to what Congress has directed, the FAA is looking at other ways to improve pilot training. As this issue goes to press, for example, we are in the process of chartering a government/industry steering committee to help us update and improve the quality of our pilot/instructor training and testing materials.

### Quality Counts

And speaking of quality ... Although PL 111-216 sets minimum hours for certification in certain areas, I firmly believe that for any certificate or rating, the *quantity* of training is less important than the *quality* of training. And you don’t need rules to improve the quality of the flying and training you do on your own. As some of this issue’s articles observe, you can learn a lot from doing commercial maneuvers, or adding a glider rating to your pilot certificate. Also, consider how basic aerobatic training can give you not only a lot of fun, but also a lot more knowledge, confidence, and skill in handling your aircraft.

I also believe that we can be much smarter, and much more effective, with highly targeted use of simulators at both ends of the spectrum. At the entry level, use of Aviation Training Devices offers the opportunity for much better training on both routine procedures and with emergencies. The addition of affordable motion-capable devices to this part of the flight training community is a welcome development. And in the air carrier world, which has long benefited from sophisticated full-motion devices, I am encouraging consideration of how focused use of less expensive devices (including those without motion) can provide effective and perhaps more frequent refresher training.

It really is a wide world of flying – so never stop learning to enjoy it.

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**Lifelong learning is key to a long life in flying. As long as you fly, keep learning *how* to fly.**