



Editor - Forbes Magazine
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Your May 9 article "Flight of Fear" ignored the strong safety standards for charter aviation, resulting in a story that is strong on sensationalism, lacking in balance, and reliant on misrepresentations of safety data.

The fact is, the charter industry has posted a continually improving safety record over the past several decades, and charter operators' emphasis on safety is the reason thousands of charter aircraft fly millions of hours each year without incident.

While the industry is a safe one, we know that any accident is one too many. Therefore, continuing efforts must and are being made to improve safety. This is done through factual safety analysis by experts (resulting in targeted changes to regulations), industry sponsored safety programs, and introduction of safety-enhancing technologies.

But the industry's work to emphasize safety doesn't stop there. Charter pilot qualifications are comparable to those for the passenger airlines, including minimums for training and flight-time experience. Additionally, the facilities that conduct safety training programs for charter pilots are held to the same rigorous regulatory standards as the centers that train airline pilots. Furthermore, charter operator weather requirements are comparable - and at times more stringent than - those for the airlines.

Equally as troubling as the information missing from your story about charter safety standards and procedures are the misrepresentations of data that are included in the story, and reveal a lack of understanding about the complex charter industry.

For instance, the Forbes article lumped together operational data about dissimilar sectors of the industry: air construction operators, air ambulance, and Alaskan ski plane operators (whose normal operation includes landing in the wilderness) are grouped with the operations for on-demand, cross-country, round-trip travel provided by charter operators using Gulfstream II aircraft. The missions for the Gulfstream jets are entirely unlike those conducted by their ski-plane counterparts, but are presented the same way through the data used in the Forbes story.

Forbes made a similar misrepresentation by comparing charter accident rates to those for the commercial airlines, yet failing to fully explain the safety data comparisons for various sectors of the charter industry. While there were 24 fatal accidents flown under Part 135 in 2004, on-demand air charters conducting passenger flights in jet aircraft experienced only 5 fatal accidents in the past 4 years according to the NTSB. Simply put, the evidence does not support the claim made in the article that charter passengers are far more likely to be in an accident than airline passengers.

On-demand operators are safe and deserve to be portrayed in a fair and accurate light. We are very disappointed in Forbes for failing their readers on this issue. We have come to expect more from a magazine that claims to be one of the most trusted resources for the world's business and investment leaders, many of whom own and operate aircraft under Part 135, a vital and safe segment of the nation's air transportation system.

Sincerely,

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