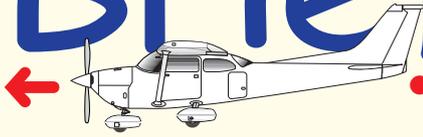


# Briefings



## Can the pilot fly?

Airline pilots are 'forgetting how to fly', according to an FAA committee that is looking into flight training. The modern pilot suffers from 'automation addiction' and places too much reliance on systems rather than flying skills. Rory Kay, co-chairman of the committee, quotes two recent accidents – the Air France A330 in the South Atlantic and the Continental commuter Q400 that crashed in upstate New York – as examples of the phenomenon. Pilot response to the loss of automated systems is "the big issue that we can no longer hide from in aviation," according to Bill Voss, president of the Flight Safety Foundation. "We've been very slow to recognise the consequence of it and deal with it."

Aviation safety organisations in the USA are prodding airlines to change training procedures to devote more time to manual flying. Pilot, they say, hesitate to take control from automatic systems in an emergency. The organisations say they are pushing on an open door, and many airlines are ahead of them in looking to change training procedures. Just where that leaves the Multi Crew Pilots Licence, where pilots are given a bare minimum of hands-on flight training and can reach the left seat of an A380 without ever having more than 10 hours solo time, is open to debate.

## Hailstones smash



## 17 helicopters

Not for the squeamish – a helicopter fly-in in Mülheim in Germany was hit by a thunderstorm blasting out hailstones the size of hen's eggs, which caused extensive damage to 17 of the aircraft. The helicopters flew into the grounds of the White Bear Hotel in Mülheim, in the Moselle region of Germany, but when the time came to leave, the pilots decided to wait while a rain shower went through. Unfortunately the shower was the curtain-raiser to a storm of extraordinary severity during



which enormous hailstones shattered car windscreens and dented sheet metal.

The effect on the helicopters was catastrophic – none escaped severe damage.

The owners took some small comfort from the fact that the storm had caught them on the ground rather than in the air.

Our pictures, taken with a mobile phone just as the storm passed, show the line-up of helicopters before the hail fell, one of the egg-sized hailstones, and the damage done to a selection of helicopters including an EC120, two Enstroms and an R44. ■

## Risk and reward

An American study of private pilots who are also chief executive officers of major corporations indicates that they run their companies differently from non-pilot CEOs, with a greater tendency to take business risks and to accept higher levels of debt and a more volatile stock than their non-flying counterparts.

The study, co-authored by professors at two prestigious American universities, concludes that the kind of 'risk-seeking' behaviour that motivates people to fly private aircraft may also make them more effective corporate leaders.

The study, named 'Cleared for take-off? CEO Personal Risk-Taking and Corporate Policies' says that pilot-led firms are more likely to engage in mergers and acquisitions, have more debt in their capital structure, meaning higher leverage and greater overall stock return volatility. "Thrill-seeking CEOs bring a certain element of this personality trait into the executive suite, as reflected by more aggressive corporate policies," it says.

The research, involving 179 chief executive pilots and 2,900 CEO non-pilots, was inspired by the 'Sensation Seeking Scale' developed in the 1970s and used in hundreds of psychology studies to measure the types of behaviours exhibited by sensation seekers, including habitual drug use, sexual activity, psychopathy, risk-taking, and cognitive innovation. The 'Thrill and Adventure Seeking' component of the scale is measured by a preference for flying or sky-diving, surfing, skiing, scuba diving, climbing and riding motorcycles.

One fly in the ointment is the fact that the same components of the Sensation Seeking Scale exhibited by pilots are also said to make people more prone to criminality, although psychologists say that as long as those personality types have adequate outlets for their energies, they can stay on the straight and narrow – and running a corporation is deemed to absorb enough excess brio.

