

Everything Matters. Everything.

Earlier this year I had the privilege of riding the jumpseat on some First Air flights. Personally, it was an incredible opportunity to experience first-hand operating in the high Arctic. I'll never forget meeting a small group of First Air pilots in Iqaluit one night—and looking south to watch the northern



lights. You can read more about the astonishing kind of flying that the First Air pilots do every day in “FABulous Flying” on page 27.

But I'd like to point out just a few of my own highlights: We landed on gravel runways topped with hard-packed snow at Arctic Bay and Resolute. The pilots who flew me to Resolute couldn't RON, as they usually do, because no mechanic was on duty. The mechanic had broken his arm a few days earlier and had been flown south for medical treatment. The ATR 42 had to divert to Pond Inlet for the night.

My stay in Resolute was longer than anticipated because a chartered Dornier blew a tire after taxiing onto the runway for takeoff—the wheel rim dug into the snow and gravel, closing the runway for several hours. The ATR 42 circled but bingedoed to Arctic Bay. An ATR 72 that was flying into Pond Inlet had to divert three hours back to Iqaluit because the temperature at Pond Inlet dropped below -35 degrees, the operating limit for the airplane. In addition, they operate in an environment where nav aids are being decommissioned and RNAV capability is slow to come on line.

Each of these challenges came within a small window of time, and they truly illustrate the extreme conditions in the high Arctic and the tremendous professionalism that is required of, and demonstrated by, the pilots who fly up there. The First Air pilots' skills were above and beyond the everyday norm. When they were flying, they were always preparing for the next emergency.

Now I know that we don't all fly in such extreme conditions, but these pilots' abilities emphasize the type of experience needed to get into the cockpit of any airplane. The fact remains that—even in the most ideal climate—we all must ready ourselves for the next emergency when we're flying.

For more than 80 years, the Air Line Pilots Association, International, has championed for well-trained, highly motivated, professional pilots in every airplane. As airline pilots, we are the most important safety feature on any airplane for the simple reason that the flight crew is responsible for making hundreds of decisions on each and every flight in order to operate in the safest manner possible—despite the great advances in airline technology that have immeasurably improved safety.

In July, ALPA is hosting a one-day forum on pilot training

that will explore many facets of developing and maintaining a well-trained pilot. The conference will bring together regulators, management, academia, and subject-matter experts to discuss the latest advances in pilot recruitment and qualifications, training technologies, and training programs.

In June, your union released a white paper titled “Leveling the Playing Field.” This paper sets the foundation for a solid aviation policy that, among other things, addresses safety issues. It also offers solutions on how to ensure that only those who meet the highest of standards are hired to be airline

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pilots—because we all know that flying today's complex airline aircraft in very congested and complicated airspace is a challenging undertaking even for experienced pilots. You can read the white paper at levelingtheplayingfield.alpa.org.

Our challenge is to address the systemic global reality that entry-level pilots hired by airlines over the past few years generally have less experience than pilots hired in previous years. In some cases, pilots barely meet the qualifications and competencies established as the accepted minimums for airline pilots.

Because fewer experienced pilots are available for hire, many countries have implemented training programs designed to produce pilots in a short period of time with virtually no experience. In addition, many airlines have lowered their minimum hiring requirements. In some cases, the hiring requirements have been lowered to the minimum allowable to acquire a commercial pilot certificate.

Recent accidents in the U.S. have led Congress and the FAA to recognize the inherent shortcomings in today's qualification standards. Numerous Aviation Rulemaking Committees have developed many recommendations that the FAA is presently compiling into a proposed rulemaking to amend the requirements regarding the flight training, qualifications, screening, and mentoring of the next generation of airline pilots as mandated by the Airline Safety and Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act of 2011 (P.L. 111-216).

ALPA remains engaged at every level and will continue leading the industry here and abroad in our quest for the safest possible flying culture.

Donald Lee Moak
Capt. Lee Moak, ALPA President