

## **Aircraft Owners and Operators Groups**

*By Thomas H. Chappell*

It seems many aircraft makes have attracted a following that is adamant that their type of aircraft is the best. Old aircraft and new aircraft alike have a group of owners who, in many cases, become almost “cult-like.”

Groups are formed that allow the owners of these aircraft to exchange stories and discuss aircraft operational issues, service issues, problems with manufacturers’ support or lack thereof, and a host of other topics.

CS&A Aviation is an insurance agency specializing in aviation risks. My agency’s team of insurance specialists has aligned itself with many of these owner groups. We believe these organizations can be more than just a fun time for the members. They can be a forum for safety topics. Anytime you improve safety in any aircraft, you reduce the cost of insurance for the entire group. Desirability increases with improved underwriter popularity and the value of the aircraft increases.

We have been asked to speak at the annual meetings and conventions for many of these owners and operators groups over the years. We have gotten to know the members and have watched these groups grow from “big boy” fraternities into very worthwhile organizations. The meeting topics evolve from gripe sessions into safety-based agendas.

I was reading the most recent issue of the TBMOPA newsletter. My company has been a supporter of the TBM group since its inception. I was impressed that much of the tone of the newsletter was aimed at operations and safety. In a short article by John Hinshaw, President of TBMOPA, he asked questions shifting the focus of safety from aircraft operations to disaster planning. These questions trigger a train of thought that is worth your attention regardless of the kind of aircraft you operate.

- *How many seconds do you have to get out of a burning airplane?*
- *Which way does your seat belt unbuckle?*
- *How many rows of seats to the exit?*
- *What color are the emergency exit lights?*
- *What is the best type of clothing to have on in case of a fire?*
- *Where is the nearest emergency exit?*

In addition to thought-provoking seminars, the TBMOPA sponsors sessions in an altitude chamber, stall recovery practice, pinch-hitter training for spouses, and training for aircraft accident survivors.

I am certainly not trying to steal the thunder of the TBM group but more to hold them up as an example of the importance such an Organization can have on the overall safe operation of any kind of aircraft.

In similar fashion, the Mitsubishi is well represented with the bi-annual PROP seminars. The Citation Jet Pilots Group is developing what will be a grand association keying on safety. I was a guest speaker at the Malibu Mirage Owners and Pilots Association (MMOPA) meeting and was impressed with the thrust of that organization.

If you own an aircraft, I would encourage you to seek out the group that has been formed for your particular type of aircraft and get involved. If there is no group, start one. It can be a lot of fun and, with the right focus, it may just save your life. →