

Who Cares?

We need more interaction with the FAA on instrument approaches.

A member of one of the aviation user organizations called his association to get an answer regarding a complex approach procedure. "We don't know, call the Air Line Pilots Association," was the response he got. This incident and discussions with FAA staff prompt me to ask: Is there any other organization other than ALPA that cares enough to get into the details of instrument chart design and procedures?

Some user organizations work hard in the area of air traffic rules and procedures, and maintaining a dialogue with the FAA in this arena. This is all well and good, however, instrument flying is about more than ATC. Sure, we all get concerned when we get a circuitous routing we don't understand. But a controller's job is to keep us all separated. Controllers don't design approach procedures; they merely clear us to fly them.

With the sudden onslaught of GPS approach procedures, it's imperative these procedures have good design that, for example, provides pilots with an adequate means of transitioning from the en route structure for an approach, without having to rely on ATC radar (see "GPS Feeder Routes, page 4). These types of issues will only be resolved when knowledgeable people on both sides work together.

For almost a year and a half, we've all enjoyed Wally Roberts' insight into the world of instrument charts. Wally gives us a unique perspective based on his expertise in the magical world of TERPs and his experience as a general aviation pilot, instrument flight instructor and former airline captain. I must confess that, having been a CFII myself now for 25 years, I thought I had a pretty good handle on this stuff. That was until I met Wally, then I realized how much I didn't understand. From reviewing the many reader comments on his articles, I get the impression many of you feel the same way.

As a result of research in preparation for his articles, Wally finds an occasional glitch in an approach procedure and points it out to the FAA. This often results in a notam issuance or a charting change (the most recent being the localizer procedure discussed in "The Look-See Crash," page 10). Even though Wally no longer chairs the Air Line Pilots Association's TERPs Committee, he still provides valuable input. Many of ALPA's recommendations regarding instrument charts result in safer instrument approaches for everyone who flies IFR, not just for airline pilots.

Is there any other civil user organization out there with the same depth of TERPs knowledge that cares about this stuff? And, if so, why aren't they working more closely with the FAA to ensure well-designed instrument procedures that pilots can understand and fly safely? This isn't an indictment of the FAA, but a comment that the system always seems to work better when both the users and designers of these procedures maintain an open dialogue. The system works even better when there's more than one voice involved.

In preparing this month's "IFR Quiz," we found an apparent error in the minimums section of the NOS chart. While the FAA wasn't crazy over hearing about it from us, a notam was issued as we went to press with this issue. We weren't trying to find fault, but wanted to get the problem fixed. If it was a misunderstanding, we wanted to get it clarified so we could all be more well informed. —Russ Lawton

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