



August 27, 2008

Aviation Director Randall Walker
500 S. Grand Central Parkway
Las Vegas, NV 89155
(702) 455-3530

Dear Director Walker,

The Experimental Aircraft Association, with 165,000 members in more than 112 nations, including more than 500 in Clark County, was very disappointed to hear of your statements calling for the banning of Experimental aircraft from North Las Vegas Airport following the tragic events of Friday, August 22.

While any accident is a tragic occurrence, and our hearts go out to the families of the people involved, it is important to note that the involvement of an Experimental amateur-built aircraft in an accident at this facility is a unique situation. The NTSB website lists eight previous fatal aircraft accidents at North Las Vegas Airport over the past 25 years. Friday's incident is the ninth fatal accident since 1982, but the only one to involve a homebuilt aircraft. To propose that eliminating all Experimental aircraft from the airport would enhance its safety record is unjustified.

EAA is committed to safe aircraft operations in all categories, including amateur-built aircraft flights and the safety of test flights over densely populated areas. Over objections from some of our members in your area, EAA concurred with the previously established FAA policy at North Las Vegas Airport that prohibited first flights of Experimental amateur-built aircraft from the facility. However, amateur-built aircraft operations following completion of the proper test flights have proven to be as safe as other operations at the airport, which the accident history at your airport substantiates.

The responsible course is to support a thorough investigation of this accident by the FAA and NTSB toward the objectives of determining the actual cause and identifying any recommendations for enhancing safety. We are all dedicated to making flight operations as safe as possible, but instant judgments and reactions only cloud the real issues and hinder realistic solutions.

Experimental amateur-built aircraft account for 10 percent of the entire U.S. fleet of aircraft. Safety levels for that segment of recreational aviation have improved dramatically over the past quarter-century, and efforts to enhance this trend continue. Over the past 25 years, NTSB figures show that the rates of accidents and fatal accidents by amateur-built aircraft have dropped significantly. In the past 12 years alone, the registered U.S. amateur-built fleet grew by some 13,000 aircraft (to more than 30,000) with no annual increase in fatal accidents — a remarkable record.

Incidentally, federal transportation statistics for 2006 (the most recent year available) indicate that homebuilt aircraft operations are safer per 100 million miles than motorcycles. [*Cars (NHTSA figures): 1.23 fatalities per 100 million miles; Amateur-built aircraft: 30.4 fatalities per 100 million miles; Motorcycles: 38.93 fatalities per 100 million miles.*] An interesting side note is that automobiles are responsible for the deaths of well over 4,500 otherwise uninvolved pedestrians each year, while only TWO fatalities on the ground can be attributed to experimental amateur-built aircraft accidents over the past 10 years.

EAA has worked very hard throughout its history to improve amateur-built aircraft safety, with member programs such as Technical Counselors and Flight Advisors offering direct education to aviation enthusiasts. In addition, EAA's philosophy in working with the FAA and NTSB has allowed potential problems to be addressed in a way that creates solutions instead of punitive regulations.

As the FAA and NTSB proceed with an investigation of this accident, we should lend our support and assistance, and focus on being prepared to address the real causes that the investigation ultimately may reveal. EAA stands ready to provide constructive assistance.

Sincerely,

Tom Poberezny
EAA President

Cc:	Bruce L. Woodbury	Commissioner
	Tom Collins	Commissioner
	Chip Maxfield	Commissioner
	Lawrence Weekly	Commissioner
	Chris Giunchigliani	Commissioner
	Susan Brager	Commissioner
	Roy Reid	Commissioner
	Virginia Valentine	County Manager