NBAA CONVENTION PREVIEW: NBAA 2015 IS VEGAS'S BABY

News / Business aviation, Events / Festivals

Since 2011, the annual **NBAA** Business Aviation **Convention** and Exhibition has bounced between Orlando, Fla., and Las Vegas because of the unique logistical requirements of the show, especially the need for a nearby airport that can safely accommodate almost 100 business jets on static display. This year the show returns to the Las Vegas Convention Center and Henderson Executive Airport from November 17 to 19, and already some interesting news and exciting events are on tap.

The static display at Henderson will feature more than 80 aircraft this year, and another 15 aircraft and two mockups at the indoor static display at the convention center. At the convention center static display Elliott Aviation will be showing, for the first time at a convention, its Hawker 400XP upgraded with a Garmin G5000 flight deck. All manner of OEMs are planning to highlight their products at the two static displays and in the exhibit hall, and not all are business jets and turboprops. Icon Aircraft is planning to bring its unique A5 amphibian to the show *(see article on page XX).* This might seem an odd exhibit at a business aviation convention, but manyNBAA attendees are smack in the middle of the target market for this highly appealing sport aircraft. **AIN** expects some other surprises at the static display this year, but lids are tight until the show opens

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on November 17.

EDUCATION EFFORTS

Safety is an important issue, as always, and NBAA has bracketed the show with two major safety-related events. On November 16, the association is hosting its annual Single Pilot Safety Standdown, open to both members and nonmembers. The focus this year is on loss of control in flight (LOC-I) incidents and accidents.

“This growing problem has been with us for some time, but it has not been sufficiently highlighted to gain the level of attention it deserves from our community,” said Jim Lara, head of the NBAA Safety Committee’s Single-Pilot Working Group. “This does not affect just the single-pilot operator; this is a universal problem that all business aircraft operators must address. Therefore, we are focusing on just this one issue to get everyone to recognize, prevent and handle LOC-I issues. We want to make this a personal issue for all concerned.” Speakers includeNTSB member Earl Weener; Paul “BJ” Ransbury, president and CEO of Aviation Performance Solutions; and Garmin engineer Noel Duerksen.

New this year is the inaugural National Safety Forum on November 19, the final day of the show. “The National Safety Forum is designed to bring together international business aviation leaders to engage in discussions with top FAA and NTSB officials so they can together address the major business aviation safety issues in an open forum,” said NBAA Safety Committee chair Steve Charbonneau. Confirmed opening speakers include NTSBchairman Christopher Hart and FAA director of accident investigation and prevention Wendell Griffin. In addition, the forum will include presentations by Flight Safety Foundation CEO Jon Beatty, International Business Aviation Council director general Kurt Edwards and members of the NBAA Safety Committee focus teams. Topics to be discussed at the forum will include runway excursions, fitness for duty, data sharing, professionalism and (in the aftermath of the Hanscom GIV crash) procedural compliance and airport and ground handling safety.

Earlier this year at the NBAA Schedulers & Dispatchers Conference, attendees were treated to an unusual event, a live emergency response simulation. The interactive drill proved popular, and Fireside Partners, which staged the event, is bringing it to the NBAA show on November 18 from 2 to 3 p.m. The simulation shows how an unprepared flight department handles a crisis, and it highlights the strong emotions and consequences that result when the company airplane is involved in an accident, including a poorly handled but all too realistic interaction with local media.

Another pre-show educational session is offered by ServiceElements on November 15. Touted as “a full-day workshop designed to get the participants to think differently about teams and how they work,” the session addresses issues such as finding new talent, team-building, creating an inclusive environment, project management and interactive roleplaying, breakout sessions and group discussions.

Other educational sessions cover myriad business aviation subjects, from the two-day NBAA Tax, Regulatory &Risk Management Conference on November 15 and 16 to Professional Development Program courses and sessions on domestic and international flight operations, weather, career issues, supersonic business jets, charter, lithium-ion batteries, unmanned aircraft systems and much more.

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DUAL OPENING DAYS

The November 17 opening-day session will feature Gil Kerlikowske, Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection; U.S. Rep. Dina Titus (D-1-Nev.); FAA Administrator Michael Huerta; and Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin.

Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, who along with first officer Jeffrey Skiles successfully ditched their Airbus A320 in the Hudson River in January 2009, will kick off the second-day opening session on November 18. "We've asked Capt. Sullenberger to speak about the relevance of the 2009 water landing, about the significance of that in terms of aviation safety, about leadership, professionalism and preparedness training," said NBAA president andCEO Ed Bolen. Nevada Lt. Gov. Mark Hutchison will also welcome attendees to the second-day opening session.

Also planned for the second-day opening session is announcement of the 2016 class of enshrinees in the National Aviation Hall of Fame and presentation of the NBAA Meritorious Service to Aviation Award to winglet czar Joe Clark.

At 6 p.m. on November 18, the NBAA/Corporate Angel Network Soiree kicks off at the Venetian Hotel Ballroom with a reception and silent auction, followed by dinner and then the live auction. The musical entertainment, featuring The Zippers, starts at 9:30 p.m. The Zippers got their start on the *StarSearch* TV show, and their specialty is performing music from the Top 40 Dance Hits list to '80s Dance Hits to the Fabulous '50s.

ISSUES DU JOUR

With the FAA funded through March 31, 2016, and the threat of a government shutdown deferred until December 11, some pressure has been relieved and this year's NBAA show can focus less on dysfunction in D.C. and more on business aviation, although the association remains vigilant on the funding front.

"I think NBAA shows have a variety of different components," said Bolen. "[Some] that always drive a lot of attention are clearly new products, new technologies and services. In a lot of ways that's always the real story at any NBAA event–what is new–and our expectation is that there will be some exciting announcements.

"In addition to that, we try to use the convention as an opportunity for NBAA to help educate our members about what is going on in the world around them and how they can consistently learn from each other–best practices and ideas. That includes the areas of safety and security."

Bolen is excited about bringing the emergency response simulation to a wider audience. "We're taking what we thought was a meaningful interactive event and making sure it wasn't a one-time thing. We're using this as an opportunity to help people make sure that they're prepared. Safety is going to be very much a focus of the convention, especially emergency response."

The issue of attracting new talent to business aviation is perennial, and NBAA is hearing from members having trouble finding qualified personnel. At a meeting with business aviation leaders in September, Bolen said, "Those companies were struggling with finding pilots and retaining pilots. There has been talk for decades about the impending pilot shortage. Over time there was a sense of, 'Well, it's always talked about and maybe it never comes,' but my sense is that people now are feeling it. With the growth of commercial aviation worldwide, it seems we're at a point where there

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is more demand than there is pilot capacity. And if some of NBAA's largest operators are feeling it, then it must be affecting all the membership."

To help introduce young people to business aviation, there are a number of events on November 19 for the Careers in Business Aviation Day. "We continue to build on career day," he said, "and we're going to be working with a lot of students to encourage new people to get into our industry.

"We expect it to be a great show driven by technologies, products and services that are being introduced, the opportunity for the industry to continue to raise the bar in terms of professionalism and in terms of safety, communicate with government officials and cultivate that next generation," Bolen concluded. "It's a big agenda over a relatively short period of time, but we're really excited about the way this has come together."

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