

History of Safety Conference: Hosted by The College of Aeronautics and Engineering

The Safety Conference, hosted by the College of Aeronautics and Engineering, began as Safety Day on April 3, 1991 as a Safety Stand-down, or no-fly day, in response to a non-fatal aviation accident that occurred the previous year. The accident had been at the peak of a growing number of safety issues and was the catalyst for the creation of this event. The Flight Program saw the need to refocus their priorities on safety. All Kent State flight operations and ground schools at the airport were cancelled for the day, and pilots were required to attend Safety Day.

Each pilot was required to attend two daytime lectures, plus the evening lecture. The event included lectures which took place on campus, on the third floor of the Kent Student Center, and at the airport (practical/hands-on) in the maintenance hangar. Speakers were primarily the chief flight instructors, a guest speaker from the NASA Lewis Research Center, and Dick Schwabe, a pioneering faculty member. The event culminated with a three-hour discussion in Henderson Hall. The event served as a day for pilots to reflect, reset, and renew their commitment toward SAFE flight and ground operations. All flight and ground operations resumed the following day.

Safety Day ran as an un-interrupted annual event from 1991 through 1997. Much of the planning and event management was conducted by Chief Instructor Kris Palcho and the Flying Club.

In 1992 they chose the newly retired Captain Al Haynes for the keynote speaker.

Haynes was the captain onboard the ill-fated Douglas DC-10 that experienced a catastrophic failure of a fan blade in the number two engine, which severed all three hydraulic lines, and made the aircraft nearly uncontrollable. Haynes effectively used his Crew Resource Management (CRM) and piloting skills to gain control of the aircraft, and together as a crew, they guided the aircraft down to an airport in Sioux City Iowa for an emergency landing. Though the landing was hard and resulted in a crash/smoke/fire, and many people lost their lives, most of the passengers and crew lived through the catastrophe, and Haynes and his crew were hailed as heroes for saving so many lives. It was quite an honor to have Captain Haynes speak at the Safety Day event.

In 1997, the Keynote Speaker was Brian Shul, Vietnam War era pilot and Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird pilot. Shul talked about his training and missions in Vietnam and Cambodia, and later flying the Mach 2+ Blackbird, fascinating us with the missions he flew all over the world. He also shared pictures from his publications *Sled Driver* and *The Untouchables*.

Though Safety Day in the 1990s was very successful and served a great purpose, the event came to an end once Palcho accepted a job with the FAA.

In 2014, Kent State hired Ben Satyshur for the newly created position Aviation Safety Program Manager. He decided to resurrect the event the following year. Safety Day was re-launched in 2015 after an 18-year hiatus. The event started off small, as it was new and unfamiliar to the administration, pilots, flight instructors, and speakers. That year helped establish this as an annual event and has grown into the event it has become today.

Speakers include KSU alumni with industry experience, but also many other non-KSU people come to speak at the event. Speakers typically use their days off or vacation time, and pay for their own travel and lodging, all because of the importance of the message they are sharing with students.

Speakers have come from the east and west coast of the U.S., as well as Florida. The event has grown from its initial audience of students and flight instructors (pilots), and now includes all aeronautics students, local pilots, corporate pilots, other collegiate flight schools/universities, alumni, FAA, aviation enthusiasts, and many others. In 2017 the event was expanded to include speakers that represented all aeronautics disciplines. In 2018, a committee was formed to help manage the event because its substantial growth.

In 2019, the event's management was handed to George Armann, aeronautics lecturer and advisor/Head Coach of the Kent State University Precision Flight Team and the event was renamed the Aeronautics Safety Conference. The flight team took an active role in planning and running the event, which helped them earn the coveted American Airlines Safety Award at the 2019 National Intercollegiate Flight Association (NIFA) Safety and Flight Evaluation Conference (SAFECON). The glass/wood trophy is on display in the lobby of the airport terminal and stands as a testament to the value of Safety Conference.

The event has undergone multiple name changes over the many years; KSU Flight Training Safety Seminar (1991), Safety Day (1992), Aviation Safety Day (1993), World Flight Day (1997), Aviation Safety Day (2015)(2016), Aeronautics Safety Day (2017)(2018), Aeronautics Safety Conference (2019) and Safety Conference, hosted by the College of Aeronautics and Engineering.

Keynote Speakers over the years include Captain Al Haynes, Brian Shul, Captain Dennis Flanagan (Captain Denny), Ken Ramsey, Captain Scott Koeppel, Captain Ted Orris, and Nicole Mitchell. 2020 will mark the sixth consecutive year, and the 13th year total for the Safety-centric event. The event continues the tradition of the Safety Stand-down and 2020 promises to bring so much more!