

AMD-35
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Department of the Interior Aviation Safety Alert



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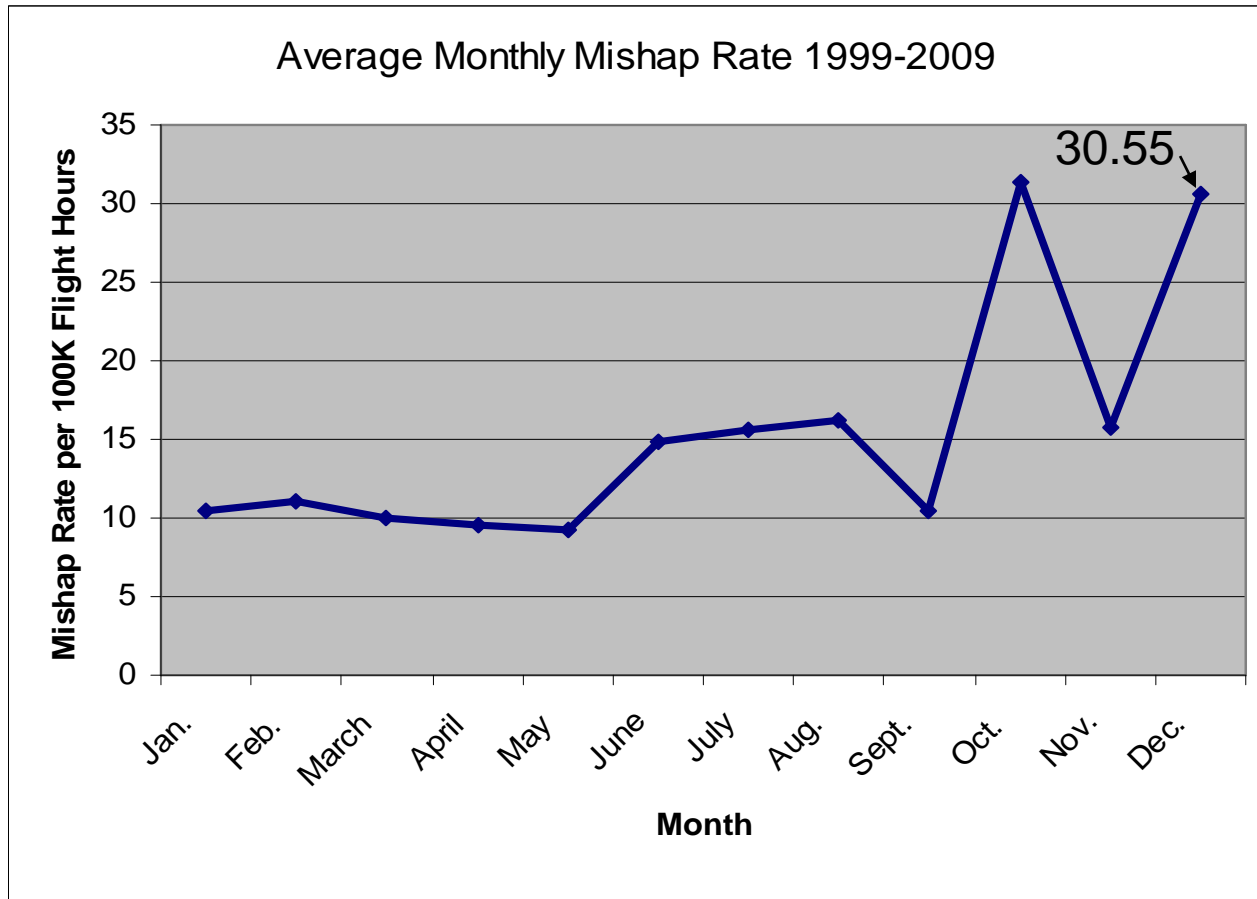
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Subject: Safety Alert: CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

Area of Concern: All Aviation Activities

Distribution: All Aviation Users

Discussion: December is a month of contrast. It is a month of relatively low flight activity yet it is the month with the second highest average mishap rate for DOI. When you look at DOI's mishap data from 1999 to 2009 (as shown in the chart below), the month with the second highest mishap rate is December (thank goodness October has past). The DOI mishap rate for this month is 117% **HIGHER** than the average rate of the remaining eleven months.



Subject: CHRISTMAS IS COMING !

So why is the month of December so “accident prone”?

As mentioned earlier, December is a month with relatively little flight activity. It’s a month of “use or lose” annual leave for Federal employees and winter weather usually means fewer days available for flying. Because of the low flight hours generated in December (remember mishap rates are defined as the number of mishaps per 100,000 flight hours), one mishap will cause the mishap rate to skyrocket.

On a personal note, the holidays bring added stress to our already stressful lives. The additional financial, social, and personal stresses can often affect our health. During the winter months, millions of Americans suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). For those folks in Alaska, it is estimated that Seasonal Affective Disorder (including subsyndromal SAD, a milder form of SAD) affects almost 25% of the population. Christmas should be a time for peace and joy, family and friends; not a time for added stress.

Recommendation: Aviation Program Managers and Aviation Safety Managers should brief this Safety Alert to all aircrew and aviation users. For everyone in aviation, be on guard, be vigilant, and don’t overlook attention to detail in your mission planning and execution. And most importantly, watch out for each other.



/s/ John Mills
John Mills
Aviation Safety Manager (Acting)