



# Department of the Interior Accident Prevention Bulletin

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Page 1 of 1

Subject: Sweat the Details

Area of Concern: Flight Safety

**Discussion:** A SAFECOM was submitted that stressed the importance of securing all items placed in the outboard baskets of a helicopter. While en route, some items fell out of a backpack that was stowed in the external basket. Fortunately, no one was injured and there was no damage to the aircraft.

When I read this SAFECOM, I was reminded of a fairly recent accident where an item exited the helicopter's cockpit area and struck the tail rotor. Tragically, all three people onboard were killed.

When we board an aircraft, most of us never think that an accident will happen as I'm sure the people who died never thought that they wouldn't see their loved ones again. I'm not advocating we approach aviation with such gloom, but unanticipated and unintended consequences will continue to occur when we don't provide aviation operations with the respect and attention to detail it demands. Complacency combined with speed/mission urgency are the most common enemies that inhibit our ability to ensure that we pay attention to important details both large and small. There's a famous quote from Captain A. G. Lamplugh of British Aviation Insurance Group from the early 1930's: **Aviation in itself is not inherently dangerous. But to an even greater degree than the sea, it is terribly unforgiving of any carelessness, incapacity or neglect.**

An aircraft is not a pickup truck. You can't simply throw stuff in the back and takeoff as you're unable to pull over to the side of the road when things aren't going well.

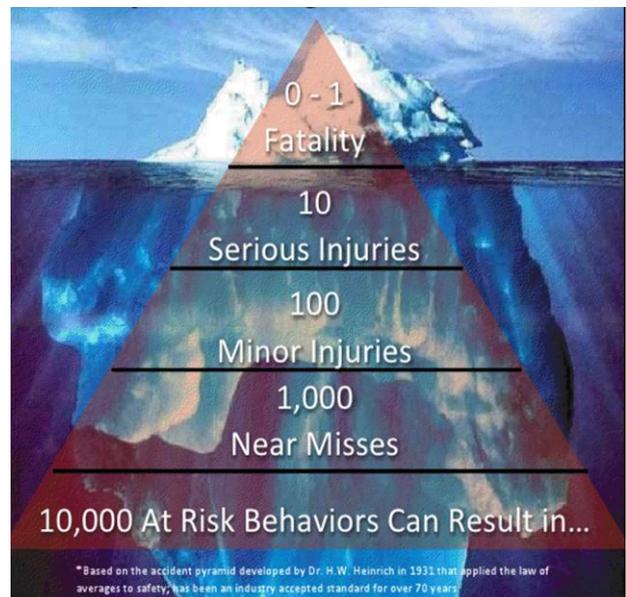
Careless attitudes towards flying are often unintentional as the details are many and the missions are often perceived as critical. Achieving success after short cutting detailed proactive safeguards (i.e. policies and procedures) builds a culture of bypassing other established safeguards in an attempt to be more productive. The process usually repeats until something bad happens.

FY13 was a very busy year in that there were some close calls that could have easily resulted in an accident. The Accident Iceberg theory developed by Dr. Heinrich in the 1930s applies today more than ever. In order to prevent an accident and/or fatality we need to address incidents at the lowest and earliest levels where they originate.

Unfortunately, we can't prevent them if we don't learn from them and we can't learn from them if people don't report them ([www.safecom.gov](http://www.safecom.gov)).

Don't take chances with your life or the life of others. Sweat the details and keep on reporting!

## Accident Iceberg



/s/ Keith Raley

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