

by Matt Thurber

This year, the Aviation Industry Expo, planned for March 20 to 22 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla., is expected to draw more than 6,000 attendees, up from last year's 5,400. Exhibitors totaled 454 last year, and this year that number is expected to climb to more than 500, including 70 new exhibitors.

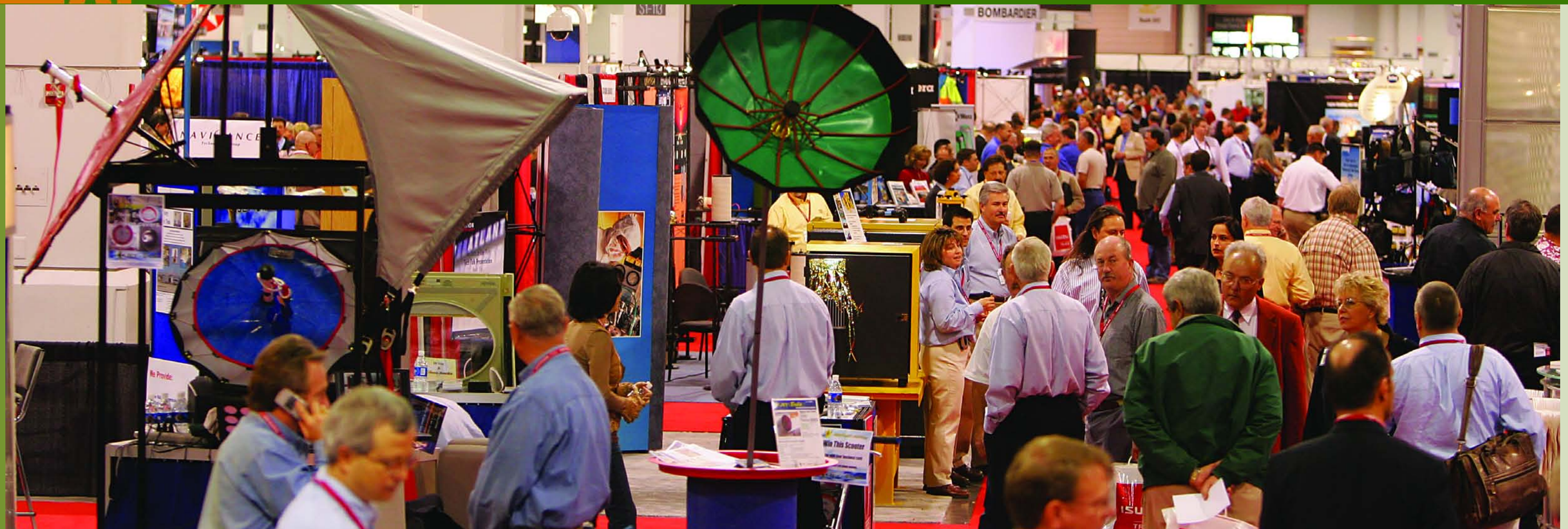
The Expo brings together members of the National Air Transportation Association (NATA) and Professional Aviation Maintenance Association (PAMA), as well as the ground-support equipment industry for the GSE Expo Conference and the annual gathering of the U.S. Department of Defense Joint Panel on Aviation Support Equipment.

This blend of aviation interests offers plenty of opportunities for attendees to learn about products, services and segments of

aviation that they might not have encountered before.

In past years, NATA held its annual convention during the Expo, but this year the association has split its annual show into two conferences, one targeting its FBO-focused membership and the other charter and management company members. NATA's new FBO Leadership Conference (see story below) is now NATA's part of the Aviation Industry Expo. The charter conference will be held in June. On the day before the Expo, NATA and the American Association of Airport Executives will hold the one-day 2007 NATA/AAAE Airports and FBO Symposium.

PAMA's 36th Annual Maintenance Symposium continues as scheduled, including more than 100 hours of technical training and perennial crowd-pleasers such as the Chili Cookoff and the Maintenance Olympics.



NATA NATA ready to tackle industry challenges

The National Air Transportation Association (NATA) will debut its new FBO Leadership Conference at this year's Aviation Industry Week show, March 20 to 22. "The traditional NATA Convention included all members," said NATA president James Coyne, "both the FBO and charter side as well as flight schools, maintenance firms and airline service companies. This year we'll have the charter meeting in June, and the FBO Leadership Conference is focusing on issues affecting our members at airports, FBOs, repair stations, airline service companies and flight schools."

Many of those issues universally affect the aviation industry, but NATA found through surveys that members prefer a more focused meeting that addresses problems specific to their segment of the industry. FBO members represent the largest segment of NATA membership, Coyne said, and they wanted a meeting focused on their community. "The FBO industry has

matured to a level now where it is as important as anything else that goes on at our airports across America," he said. "Hundreds of well run professional FBOs are attracting new capital, leadership and a new generation of FBO managers. It's an exciting time to bring them together, train them in new technology and regulations and be their voice in Washington."

The FBO Leadership Conference will serve as the association's required annual meeting. On the day before Aviation Industry Week begins, NATA will also host the 2007 NATA/AAAE Airports & FBO Symposium. This smaller meeting provides a forum for airport and FBO managers to discuss energy and fuel policy, airport security, secondary containment, emergency response planning and other airport/FBO issues.

The event is also gaining the interest of the U.S. Coast Guard, which will be hosting its USCG Aeronautical Support Equipment Conference, sponsored by the Coast Guard's Aircraft Repair & Supply Center in Elizabeth City, N.C.

Challenges Ahead

While optimistic about growth in aviation, Coyne is concerned about how the government plans to fund the public aviation infrastructure. "The economy will do very well unless the government

does something to hurt it," he said. "There are many reasons to be incredibly optimistic. Foremost among them is the strong economic health of the nation and the world and consistently good corporate earnings growth. We're hoping that we, together with groups in Washington, can prevent [the government] from hurting our growing industry."

While the possibility of user fees has garnered the most attention from aviation lobby groups, "there are a lot of other risk factors," Coyne said, "although user fees are at the top." Tax policies that affect aircraft ownership and use are increasing concerns, "and they haven't gotten as much attention as user fees. The ability of people to deduct their use of aircraft or put their aircraft in charter and deduct charter costs is a key issue. There is a lot of confusion at the IRS and in Congress about this."

Another critical tax issue is the fuel fraud tax, imposed on the aviation industry because a politician was convinced that truckers and farmers were buying jet fuel and using it to run their trucks to avoid paying highway fuel taxes. If FBOs don't make the complicated effort to seek reimbursement for the temporary tax on jet fuel, then the tax and the reimbursable amount remains in the Highway Trust Fund.

The fuel fraud tax, Coyne said,

"is incredibly confusing, detrimental and almost dishonest. To have aviation taxes in the Highway Trust Fund is nothing more than theft. I'm hopeful we can pursue that. There are always tax issues that can affect our industry." (See story page 28.)

All these tax issues were due to be addressed after the President released the new budget early last month, Coyne said. "That's going to be the kickoff of this year-long football game." After the budget's release, he added, analysis of what the government proposes for FAA funding, user fees and other taxes "will determine whether we catch the ball on the two-yard or the 40-yard line."

No matter who ends up paying to operate the FAA and modernize the ATC system, he added, "the government really has to demonstrate that it is capable of modernizing ATC. There is no doubt that America is falling behind. The decisions we make in the FAA reauthorization process will determine whether we fall further behind or have the ability and skill to get control of the modernization monster."

Coyne said that the U.S. lags behind several countries with more modern ATC systems, including New Zealand, Australia and some European countries. "Even Fiji has

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NATA FBO Leadership Conference Key Events

Monday, March 19:
NATA President's Tournament at Disney's Magnolia Golf Course

Welcome Reception at Fantasy of Flight Museum

Wednesday, March 21:
NATA Industry Excellence Awards Breakfast; keynote by Lou Holtz, football coach and ESPN analyst

Aviation Business Forecast panel with Robert McTeer Jr., chancellor, Texas A&M University System; Jim Christiansen, president, NetJets; Ed Iacobucci, president and CEO, DayJet; and John Kilduff, vice president of the energy risk management group at The Fimat Group

PAMA Obstacles ahead for mx industry

A "perfect storm" of problems is enveloping the aviation maintenance industry, warned Brian Finnegan, president of the Professional Aviation Maintenance Association (PAMA), on the eve of PAMA's 36th Annual Aviation Maintenance Symposium. "Schools are closing, industries are crying out for technicians, aviation businesses are trying to grow and expand and can't find the right people. We have a lot of problems we have to deal with," he said.

While the general aviation industry is in strong shape, large numbers of aircraft deliveries projected for the next decade and waning interest in maintenance careers threaten aviation growth. A fundamental issue, said Finnegan, is that FAA aircraft mechanic curriculum requirements have languished as the industry has advanced. "The curriculum is behind," he explained.

He added that the requirement that mechanic students spend a

specific amount of time—1,900 hours—in classes and labs is antiquated. "Competency is not a function of how much time is spent in class," he said. And this begets another FAR-based requirement: that students make up any class time lost due to absence. "The idea that you have to make up time is a joke," he added.

Recent meetings that Finnegan has held with Jim Ballough, the FAA's flight standards director, indicate that there might eventually be some relief from the onerous mechanic schooling regulations, although there never will be a complete elimination of the hours requirement. "Ballough is committed to some kind of relief," said Finnegan. "We're supportive of a different way of getting people into our industry without this onerous process."

In an effort to jump start the careers of entry-level aircraft mechanics and help existing mechanics enhance their careers, PAMA and its parent and affiliate SAE International have launched an industry-led certification program for mechanics.

Young people interested in aviation maintenance careers would be able to get started without having to attend 1,900 hours of schooling in the traditional Airframe & Powerplant mechanic

curriculum. Initial certification would include basic understanding of safety issues, tools and regulations. These pre-mechanics could continue to get the experience needed to qualify to take the A&P certificate exams while working as apprentices and also add to their knowledge with other industry-certification classes.

PAMA is inviting the aviation industry to participate in development of the certification program, which will be backed by SAE International's global standards development capabilities (see story on next page).

"Aviation maintenance is a great place to work," Finnegan said. He said that the industry's attitude toward maintenance is shifting; it is coming to recognize maintenance as an important contributor to the success of aviation enterprises rather viewing it as a burdensome cost creator. "It's beginning to take on an aura of investment in the workforce, rather than a cost to be minimized," he said.

In addition, modern aircraft technicians are highly educated and key elements to making companies successful. "We still have the challenge of marketing [aircraft maintenance]," he said. "A lot of people really don't know enough about us. Word is going to get out that this is a really

desirable workplace."

Clark Gordon, EMS Satcom account manager for commercial sales for the Eastern U.S., is currently chairman of PAMA and served as vice chairman for four years. Like Finnegan, Gordon is keen on the industry-led mechanic certification program and is working with PAMA board members who will chair committees to work on efforts like mechanic certification. Gordon plans to make PAMA's Web site an active part of recruiting members to volunteer for the committees. The certification program will not only be good for the aviation industry, Gordon explained, but also will help bring new members to PAMA.

"It's amazing how well our industry is doing," said Gordon. "Job opportunities are a big plus," and compared to just five years ago, mechanic salaries are finally climbing. "When you consider knowledge and safety, a certified technician is a tremendous plus. We need to do more to promote our industry, and that's where PAMA comes in."

Jack Demeis, president of maintenance software maker Continuum Applied Technology, will deliver the keynote speech on his vision of maintenance in the year 2025 at PAMA's Awards Breakfast on March 22.

PAMA Key Events

Tues. - Thurs., March 20-22:
PAMA Aviation Maintenance Olympics competition sponsored by Snap-on

Wednesday, March 21:
Chili Cookoff
Exhibit Floor, Orange County Convention Center

PAMA Welcome Reception
Orange County Convention Center

Thursday, March 22:
PAMA Awards Breakfast sponsored by Gulfstream Aerospace/General Dynamics Aviation Services

Annual Membership and Charter Leader Meeting
Orange County Convention Center

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NATA

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a more modern ATC capability. China is spending billions on new airports and new ATC capabilities, so I'm worried that within three or four years if we haven't got our act together, we'll be falling further and further behind."

Security is another government issue that worries Coyne. Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.), chairman of the aviation subcommittee of the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, plans to hold hearings this year on general aviation security. "We're waiting with a lot of trepidation as to where Rockefeller decides to go on this question," Coyne said. "He believes there's a gaping hole in general aviation security, and it seems he wants to make general aviation users go through the same hassles airline passengers do. We're very worried about that."

Another development that concerns Coyne is that general

aviation airports are running out of space because manufacturers are building so many new airplanes. Airports need to expedite approval processes for building new facilities to keep up with industry growth, he said. "This is going to be a crisis in general aviation."

NATA's big success during the past year was helping persuade the Environmental Protection Agency to modify proposed regulations on containment of fuel storage facilities (See story on page 24).

Another coup was the success of its promotion of voluntary restrictions at Teterboro, N.J., a move that has dramatically reduced neighbor noise complaints and (so far) deflected onerous regulation. "We've been pleased with that," Coyne said, and NATA plans to roll out similar efforts for other airports with noise and neighbor issues. "We've already identified the 100 most-needed general aviation airports, and each one will have a committee. If we can work together and stop politicians from [stumping] against [air-



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ports), we can meet growth targets in the years ahead."

Coyne is most pleased by insurance cost reductions NATA members have realized through participation in the association's Safety 1st line service training and safety monitoring program. "We're finding that [participants'] levels of losses are more than 50 percent less than FBOs who [don't use Safety 1st]," he said. "There are a lot of stupid ground accidents in the FBO business, and we're committed to reducing those. For the

Last year 454 exhibitors convened at AIE. Organizers expect more than that this year in Orlando.

first time, the largest insurance company in the country [USAIG] is giving 5 percent off to FBOs that are part of the Safety 1st program."

General aviation has a promising future, Coyne concluded, and continues to grow by serving smaller markets away from major metropolitan areas. ■

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PAMA

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PAMA plans mechanic certification program

The way aircraft mechanics learn their trade and progress through the aviation ranks has some flaws, and Brian Finnegan, president of the Professional Aviation Maintenance Association (PAMA), is promoting an industry-led consensus standard-driven technician certification program designed to improve maintenance training and certification.

Under the existing system, a prospective mechanic must either attend school for 1,900 hours or gain 30 months of full-time experience working as a mechanic trainee. After meeting those requirements, the candidate can qualify to take the FAA practical and written tests for the mechanic certificate with airframe and powerplant (A&P) ratings.

Finnegan pointed to several drawbacks in this system. First, most freshly certified A&Ps lack experience and must undergo significant additional training and seasoning before becoming productive. As a result, they are not qualified to be

paid journeyman wages, Finnegan explained. On the other hand, he asked, is it fair to pay a new A&P apprentice wages after he has gone to school for about two years?

PAMA's new certification program, under development with PAMA parent and affiliate SAE International and the Performance Review Institute, seeks to offer three levels of certification for all types of aircraft mechanic, including those without any previous training. The levels are technician, professional and leadership.

The goal is to offer entry-level training for new mechanics who can work as apprentices to gain experience toward earning their A&P. The idea is that companies should be willing to hire such trainee-mechanics because they won't have to pay them as much as A&Ps, but the future mechanics will start with basic skills and safety training that will allow them to progress in an aircraft maintenance career. Naturally they would have to continue taking classes to progress. For existing A&Ps, the certification program will offer additional training in focused areas such as non-destructive testing, avionics, type-specific aircraft maintenance and leadership.

Participants in the PAMA/SAE certification program will see an added benefit, tracking their training and maintenance experience using a software-based learning management system developed by Pathlore. This system can also be used to send reminders to users



when recurrent training is due.

The certification program will be available to A&Ps and non-A&Ps, Finnegan said. While PAMA/SAE will not provide the actual training for the certification levels, the association will lead the consensus-standard certification effort, assisted by interested companies and industry volunteers. PAMA is now soliciting volunteer subject matter experts to help develop the certification program. Those interested in joining the PAMA/SAE International Aerospace Maintenance Committee should e-mail Frank Bokulich (bokulich@pama.sae.org).

The first certification program should be in place by the end of this year, Finnegan said. Once the system is operational, he expects that the insurance industry will view consensus-standard training certification as a safety improvement. "In a hard insurance mar-

The technician certification program PAMA is promoting aims to make training requirements more applicable to the real world.

ket," he said, "it may not be possible to get insurance if you're not certified." Program members might also see reductions in product liability and workman's compensation insurance rates, he added.

"We have an education challenge ahead of us," Finnegan said. "Automotive mechanics and real estate agents get more training annually than aircraft mechanics. And a lot of aircraft mechanics get training but they don't validate it."

While PAMA has not revealed costs for certification program users, Finnegan doesn't expect overall training costs to rise. "What this will do is give [mechanics] a model they can fit into that will be a standard developed by the industry." ■

The AIE Booths

by David A. Lombardo

Velcon Filter displays laser sensing fuel quality control

Velcon Filter of Colorado Springs, Colo., will be showing its Velcon contaminant analyzer (VCA) at Booth No. 1238. The VCA uses laser-sensing technology to act as a last-stage quality check downstream of the last filtration to ensure that the fuel being loaded onto aircraft is clean and dry. In the event of wet or dirty fuel (or both), the system shuts down the fueling operation and alerts the user, with a minimal amount of unfit fuel reaching the airplane.

Spray Nine announces new aircraft cleaning solution

AV-8 aircraft cleaner, a newly released product designed for both painted and unpainted sensitive aircraft metals, will be featured at Booth No. 1653. According to Spray Nine of Johnstown, N.Y., AV-8 requires little to no dwell time, cleans with less scrubbing and is compatible with painted and unpainted exteriors, including epoxy and polyurethane coatings. It also contains a corrosion-inhibiting package to help prevent the metal corrosion often associated with nonauthorized cleaning chemicals.

AV-8 conforms to ASTM F 502 (the standard for cleaning and chemical maintenance materials on painted aircraft surfaces) for popular primers and topcoats such as Type I, class C high-solids epoxy primers, epoxy topcoats and Type I high solid polyurethane coatings.

Daniels Manufacturing demos Safe-T-Cable

Lockwire is obsolete, according to Daniels Manufacturing of Orlando, Fla. The company will be demonstrating its Safe-T-Cable for the first time at AIE at Booth No. 1369.

According to the company, Safe-T-Cable is constructed of high tensile-strength stranded cable and is more flexible than its lockwire counterpart with equivalent working diameter. The cable, featuring electrically fused easy-threading ends, is pre-cut to various lengths and supplied with a square-formed end cap attached to one end.

Corridor Software runs on cellphone

Jack Demeis, president of Austin, Texas-based Continuum Applied Technology, will be demonstrating the company's newest offering, mobile computing. Demeis will demonstrate his Corridor software running on a mobile telephone and cellphone-connected laptop at Booth No. 1275.



"From any place there is cell service, a user can log in live and use Corridor in real time without having to download or upload," he said. "What that means is a mechanic on the ramp or on the road can order a part via a portable device, instantly notifying inventory personnel."

The company will also have its new touch-panel technology and the recently released Corridor Version 8 on display. The latest version includes new features such as significant enhancements to the regulatory compliance module for aircraft maintenance record tracking.

JFM Engineering introducing battery test equipment

Two new battery charging-related products will be introduced by JFM Engineering of Miami in Booth No. 1474. The miniMaster-charger is designed to test small battery packs including nickel-cadmium, lead-acid and other types of recharge-



BTAS 16-terminal monitor

able battery up to 10A-hr. The unit offers flexible programming of testing parameters and interfaces with the BTAS16 system.

The BTAS16 is designed to provide automation of battery and cell readings for the testing of nickel-cadmium aircraft batteries. It can accommodate 16 terminals with either one battery up to 24 cells, two bat-

teries with 11 cells or three batteries with seven cells per terminal. System highlights include automatic reading of battery current, battery voltage, individual cell voltages and battery temperature. The data being recorded can be viewed in either tubular numerical readings or bar-graph display.

According to Edmundo Lopez, the company's president, the BTAS16 is not an adaptation of a complicated laboratory system. Rather, it was designed specifically to fit the needs of battery shops of all sizes.

Lista features toolbox foam drawer liners

Taking to heart the old saw "Take care of your tools and your tools will take care of you," Lista International will be displaying its shadowed foam drawer insert liners at Booth No. 1259. According to the company, the liners protect, identify and control valuable tools and inventory.

The liners protect tools or inventory from movement and contact with other

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PAMA

FAA considers changes to repair station rules

The comment period on the latest changes to the FAA regulations governing Part 145 repair stations closed on March 1. Brian Finnegan, president of the Professional Aviation Maintenance Association (PAMA), has been monitoring the regulatory proposals and evaluating their effect on PAMA members.

Under the proposed rules, the FAA rating system would change. For example, engine ratings would no longer depend on horsepower but would be separated by engine type (piston, turbine and APU). The biggest change involves the requirement to establish a quality system, something that the industry had been expecting the FAA to propose. The FAA expects that the quality system requirement will lead to fewer quality control problems, which in turn should reduce the number of Airworthiness Directives that the agency must issue.

Other proposed changes to Part 145 include a requirement for repair stations to maintain a capability list, designating a chief inspector and providing permanent housing for facilities, equipment, materials and personnel. Another change lets the FAA prevent a person who held a repair station certificate that was revoked from opening another repair station. This also would prevent a manager who was responsible for certificate revocation from opening or managing another repair station. "There are plenty of issues here that are going to require careful scrutiny," said Finnegan. ■

News Note

Attendees of the Professional Aviation Maintenance Association's annual aviation maintenance symposium usually come to the chili cookoff to sample the food and enjoy a great party, but many also are there to see if they have won the Snap-on toolbox raffle. Tickets are on sale during the symposium, at \$10 for one ticket or \$20 for two including a bonus Snap-on tool. The drawing for the toolbox—a double-bank 11-drawer Snap-on roll cab with stainless steel top—takes place during the chili cookoff on March 21. Proceeds help the PAMA Foundation provide training opportunities to mechanics and students. ■

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NATA NATA ready for coming user-fee fight

At last year's National Air Transportation Association Convention (NATA), one of the more memorable sessions was the NATA strategic issues forum, which featured user-fee proponent James May, CEO of the Air Transport Association. Although May wasn't expected to receive a friendly welcome at the general aviation-oriented show, his views on user fee funding of the FAA were undeniably of keen interest to the audience.

May said nothing new at the forum, reiterating his association's oft repeated point that general aviation isn't paying its fair share of the costs of operating the FAA and the ATC system. He continued his efforts to separate light-aircraft general aviation from

business aviation operators, characterizing them as different segments of aviation. "Business aviation," he said, "uses 15 percent of the overall ATC services and pays just 4 percent. General aviation, apart from business aviation, uses roughly 4 percent of ATC services and pays about 2 percent."

May's message was simple: "What ATA is seeking is a pay-for-what-you-use system that allocates costs among all system users."

The release of the President's budget early last month suggests that May might get his wish. And now that the government's user-fee proposals are more concrete, battle lines are forming and associations like NATA are preparing to fight hard to protect their members. "Different sides want to increase taxes on our industry," said NATA president James Coyne. "We're going to have a very interesting struggle."

NATA didn't invite any airline representatives to this year's event (the FBO Leadership Conference) at Aviation Industry Week, "but they're welcome to come," Coyne said. "I hope the airlines realize that they should be working with



NATA president James Coyne (left) and NBAA president Ed Bolen try to persuade ATA CEO James May (right) that user fees will harm all of aviation.

the rest of the aviation community rather than trying to isolate themselves. Why do we want to get into this fight? This funding mechanism is not broken."

The airlines should worry more about trying to run their businesses profitably than trying to shift costs to general aviation operators, Coyne said. "The airlines have been losing tons and tons of money, so they're desperately trying to find somebody else to pick up the cost. But if all of general aviation went away tomorrow, the cost of ATC wouldn't go down by a penny. All the controllers still have to be there, the regional air-

NATA Few changes to fuel containment rule

The Environmental Protection Agency's final spill prevention, control and countermeasure (SPCC) regulations proved less onerous than expected, according to Eric Byer, NATA vice president for government and industry affairs. "We got everything we needed in the final rule," he said.

The final SPCC rules are basically the same as those released in a December 2005 notice of proposed rulemaking. This rulemaking began in July 2002, and the EPA's interpretation of certain

rules had NATA—and similar associations—worried. The EPA's proposed rules suggested that airport mobile refueling trucks would have to be parked in specific "sized" secondary containment facilities when not in use.

The wording could mean airports or FBOs would have to build special containment areas for fuel truck parking or containment areas around each truck large enough to hold a fuel spill. NATA and other associations pointed out to the EPA that the existing SPCC rules already covered fuel trucks, and in any case the EPA had not tried to enforce its new interpretation of the SPCC rules regarding sized secondary containment.

Under the final rule, mobile refuelers are exempt from the

sized secondary containment requirements. However, according to NATA, FBOs and airports will have to consider secondary containment in terms of providing a means to handle "the most likely spill scenario."

Regulation §112.7(c) requires that fueling companies "Provide appropriate containment and/or diversionary structures or equipment to prevent a discharge as described in §112.1(b)...at a minimum, you must use one of the following prevention systems or its equivalent:...dikes, berms or retaining walls sufficiently impervious to contain oil; curbing; culverting, gutters, or other drainage systems; weirs, booms or other barriers (such as drain plugs); spill diversion ponds; retention ponds; or sorbent materi-

als." The rules also mandate, according to NATA, "integrity testing of above-ground storage tanks, training and response plans in the event of an oil discharge."

The SPCC rule does not cover aircraft and other motive power equipment. Small facilities with less than 10,000 gallons of oil will not need a professional to certify the facilities.

The EPA is revising its 400-page Guidance for Regional Inspectors handbook, which tells inspectors how to apply the SPCC rules. Byer said, "We don't know how they will enforce it. We need to make sure there are no rogue inspectors," referring to the possibility that EPA inspectors, like some FAA inspectors, will develop their own creative interpretations of regulations.

The final version of the fuel containment rule exempts mobile refuelers, a victory for NATA.

At the same time as the final SPCC rules were released, the EPA also published a new notice of proposed rulemaking extending until July 1, 2009, the compliance deadline for amended and new SPCC plans. The extension does not cover "facilities that were required to have SPCC plans in place before the 2002 deadline," according to NATA.



The AIE Booths

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objects in the drawer while making empty compartments easy to spot by using a two-layer insert system. The upper blue foam liner cushions and protects tools and components in shaped cutouts while the bottom yellow foam liner makes it easy to spot missing items.

The foam drawer liners meet the specification for FOD/FOE tool control programs and can be customized to hold the specific tools stored in the customer's storage cabinet drawer. They can be ordered in self-cut liner kits, individual self-cut liners or custom-cut liners.



The two liners protect tools and make missing ones easy to notice.

Sky Harbour aircraft beautifies warbirds and bizjets

Whether restoring the exterior of a warbird to its former glory or upgrading a Gulfstream interior from rags to riches, Sky Harbour Aircraft of Goderich, Ontario, has done it. For more than 50 years the company has been refurbishing interiors and exteriors, averaging 150 aircraft annually, from Cessna 172s to de Havilland Dash 8s (below) to Gulfstream IIIs. Company personnel will be at Booth No. 1765 to discuss operators' needs.

Sky Harbour Aircraft has 80 craftsmen and offers maintenance, modifications, interiors and paint. The company also holds the STC for ice damage prevention plates for a majority of Piper, Cessna and Beech twins.



PRG Aviation systems expands FBO operational tools

Woodland Hills, Calif.-based PRG Aviation Systems will be demonstrating new, real-time reporting tools designed to help FBOs manage day-to-day operations. The FBOoperational Fuel Management System offers credit-card processing, concierge services, financial reporting and more. The system will be on display at Booth No. 1727.

According to company president and CEO Hubert Lee, "We offer a computer-based tool that allows better communications between customers, customer service and line service departments. The primary goals of the system are to see that all services are provided in the timeliest manner and provide management with metrics and other reporting feedback to maintain cost control and improve margins."

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PAMA Association urges new classification for mechanics

Aircraft mechanics have long complained that their skills are not recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor, which classifies occupations in its Standard Occupational Classification system. The complaint by mechanics goes something like this: "The Department of Labor lists us as unskilled labor, when in fact we are highly trained and skilled."

That assumption of misclassification is actually not accurate; the Department of Labor does not distinguish between certified aircraft mechanics who hold FAA mechanic certificates and non-certified aircraft mechanics or mechanic helpers. For these workers, the Department of Labor classification is the same, and there is no mention of skilled or unskilled labor.

The Professional Aviation Maintenance Association (PAMA) aims to change that, according to PAMA president Brian Finnegan. "PAMA strongly encourages the U.S. Department of Labor to establish a distinct Standard Occupational Classification for FAA-certified mechanics," he wrote in a letter to members.

According to the association, lack of proper classification relegates aircraft mechanics to a status where their significance is not recognized. It's not just the lack of respect that the absence of classifi-

cation seems to impart, however. "Enhancing safety is the driving reason [the Department of Labor] needs to identify FAA-certified mechanics with their own labor code," Finnegan wrote. "There are a million reasons to want our own code," he told AIN. "But it helps us define the size of our population and its location. With the Department of Labor focusing on regional development, if it wants to know the size of the aircraft mechanic population in Texas, it can't."

Finnegan has met with the Department of Labor to try to resolve the issue. In addition to classification for FAA-certified mechanics, he would also like to see classification recognition of apprentice aircraft mechanics, which would tie in with PAMA's recent efforts to establish an industry-consensus standard training system for new and existing mechanics.

While PAMA estimates that there are about 300,000 aircraft mechanics listed in the FAA's database, Finnegan believes that only about half that number are active in the aviation industry. The Department of Labor classification would help the industry develop better information about the people who keep airplanes safe, he explained.

"We're trying to make the case that they need to make a labor code for [certified] aircraft mechanics. This is the century of airworthiness. We've come as far as we can with cockpit design. Why don't we replace the pilots with maintenance professionals who can monitor systems and upload repairs and make changes? We can't get down the road without [mechanics]. I think we will succeed at this." ■

NATA Career center to open at this year's AIE

As the aviation business grows stronger, skilled personnel are getting more difficult to find. And many Aviation Industry Expo attendees might be seeking new jobs. To help bring employers and potential employees together, the Aviation Industry Expo Career Center opens on Tuesday, March 20, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Late last year Congress enacted the Aerospace Revitalization Task Force bill to establish a task force "to develop a strategy for the federal government to promote and monitor public and private sector education and training programs for science, engineering, technology, mathematics and skilled trades; and partnerships with industry, organized labor, academia, and state and local governments for occupational information and for workforce education, training, and certification resources, including grants, loans and scholarships."

The Career Center is free to Expo attendees. Participants should bring multiple copies of their résumés.

Fuel Issues featured at AIE

Oil companies, fuel truck manufacturers and fueling equipment vendors are regular exhibitors at Aviation Industry Expo, but attendees who are interested in learning more about fuel issues might want to consider these sessions. The March 22 sessions are scheduled for the GSEXPo International 2007 Conference, which is being held as part of the Expo, and the March 20 and 21 Tech Talks are regular Expo sessions.

Tues. and Wed., March 20 and 21: (Tech Talks)

- Monitor Cartridges and Media Migration
- Aircraft Misfueling—A Continuing Threat
- Synopsis of Fuel Cards

Thurs., March 22:

The Future for Fueling (includes live demos of alternative-fueled equipment)

Part I

- How to Lower Your Fuel Costs
- Automating Refueling
- Hydrogen Fuel Cell Technologies and CNG: financial data, challenges and solutions address real-world timing of H2 economy.

Part II

- Airline Perspectives on Alternative Fuel
- Hydrogen Fuel Cell Technologies (continued).
- TUG Engineering Group.

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NATA NATA stumps for safety management

Implementing a safety management system (SMS) is paying off in a big way for FBOs, according to NATA president James Coyne. Reductions in the numbers of ground accidents have finally had the beneficial result of lowering insurance costs, he said, and FBOs that don't use an SMS such as NATA's Safety 1st program have loss rates 50 percent higher than FBOs with active SMS programs.

Insurance underwriter USAIG recognizes the benefits of SMS and offers 5-percent discounts to FBOs that participate in Safety 1st. "We're trying to help all our members join Safety 1st to help eliminate ground accidents," Coyne said. As he flies around the U.S. in his King Air, Coyne gets a firsthand look at how FBOs handle aircraft and their approaches to safety. "I've seen a huge change in the last five years," he said. "Ground handling and marshaling have changed, there are more cones now, tug drivers are using more wingwalkers. It's making a big difference."

NATA's Safety 1st SMS program has been widely adopted by FBOs, and now the association is offering SMS for charter operators. The FAA is considering making SMS a requirement, and SMS programs such as NATA's provide one means of implementing safety-management measures before the FAA requires them. Airports are also implementing SMS, and the FAA released draft Advisory Circular 150/XXXX-XX early this year to introduce the concept to airport operators. AC 120-92, issued last year, discusses SMS recommendations for aircraft operators.

While some may see SMS implementation as yet another expensive and resource-depleting burden, the SMS concept is not complicated and can be done at a reasonable cost. A properly administered SMS begins with an organization setting safety goals, planning how to achieve them and measuring the performance of the SMS. An SMS, according to NATA, "concerns itself

with organizational safety, which goes beyond conventional health and safety issues in a working environment."

"People have a difficult time getting their arms around it," said Amy Koranda, NATA director for safety management. She explained that operators often mistakenly believe that they are safe because they have never had an accident. The problem is that there is no measurement of events that can lead to an accident, and thus no effort to prevent those events or minimize their impact. "They don't look at what happened," she said. The SMS requires participants to record how they fixed the problem and monitor the workplace to prevent problems.

To help participants actively manage their SMS, NATA is planning a regular Webcast to discuss SMS issues and incidents. The association is also using Webcasts to help participants get started with their SMS, and NATA will add others for human factors training, accident/incident investigation and emergency response. New SMS participants can also attend NATA training courses held periodically around the U.S.



Amy Koranda, NATA director of safety management, promotes Safety 1st.

For air operations-focused members, NATA plans to supplement the SMS program with a new audit standard for charter operators. This standard would satisfy audit requirements for other charter auditing programs and eliminate the need to have multiple audits, Koranda explained. NATA would also provide training for auditors.

The association is developing event-management software to help operators track safety events and the cost of safety problems, including indirect costs. The software would not only track an event but wouldn't let the user sign off without doing a hazard analysis and risk assessment. It would then ensure that the user followed up on that event's remediation. "It doesn't let things fall through the cracks," said Koranda.

Finally, NATA's Russ Lawton, director of safety and security, is helping develop new in-compliance software for charter operators. Operators could use the software whenever a trip is being dispatched, to make sure that all the legal requirements are met for the trip, the aircraft, the flight crew and passengers (some of whom might be on the TSA no-fly list, for example). This software will be Web-based so operators could use it to provide information to auditors and their FAA principal inspectors, Lawton said. ■

NATA ACs incite debate among members

The issues of minimum standards set by airports for airport-based businesses and exclusive rights at airports have long been contentious, and two new draft FAA advisory circulars on the subject have stirred up the debate. Draft AC 150/5190.6 addresses exclusive rights, while draft AC 150/5190.7 covers minimum standards for commercial aeronautical activities. Both subjects have generated a significant number of complaints from NATA members.

"Airports are getting into the ground-handling and fuel business," said Eric Byer, NATA vice president for government and industry. "It's difficult for us to understand why airports use federal dollars to compete with FBOs. For us that's a big no-no."

One reason that airports are increasingly trying to take over revenue from service providers is that revenue generated by airline traffic has dropped. "Airlines are putting pressure on airports to reduce their costs," Byer said. And airport operators see all the money that FBOs make from fuel sales and want to secure some of those funds for the airport.

One airport in Alabama even used money from the federal Small Community Air Service program to buy ground-handling equipment to compete with an airport service provider. "We're trying to make sure that [airports] shouldn't be diverting these funds for equipment," he said. NATA is hoping to attach some language about this problem to the FAA reauthorization package that comes before Congress this year.

AC 150/5190.6 suggests that airports can provide aeronautical services "if private enterprises cannot be attracted or if the potential revenue from providing aeronautical services is so great that it would help the airport become more financially self-sustaining." The airport must, however, use its own employees and resources and cannot hire a management company to provide those services, according to the AC.

While an airport "is not required to accept all qualified service providers," the AC explained, "an airport sponsor cannot deny qualified aeronautical service providers the opportunity to compete for the right to be an on-airport service provider."

Significantly, the AC clarified that an

airport cannot elect to allow only one FBO just "because it's most convenient." However, NATA wrote in comments about the draft AC, airports shouldn't think they are violating exclusive rights requirements just because there is only one FBO on the field.

"Most small general aviation airports," NATA explained, "do not have a need for multiple providers, nor do they have enough activity at their airport to support multiple businesses." The association maintains that the FAA should more clearly explain in the AC what exclusive rights means and suggest how airports can evaluate economic viability to determine if an airport has room for new competitive service providers.

A company that wants to file a com-



The draft circulars address airports' increasing interest in getting involved in ground-handling and fuel business to raise revenue.

plaint with the FAA about exclusive rights violations at an airport should know that the agency will require an administrative review, and the airport will be allowed to respond to the allegations in the complaint. After that, the AC stated, "The FAA is required to make a formal written determination on the complaint."

In draft AC 150/5190.7, NATA commented to the FAA that it is concerned that Section 1.2, Part F "is encouraging airport sponsors to adapt their minimum standards to attract new tenants at the airport." Airports could interpret this as allowing them to apply the minimum standards selectively to a new airport business, while applying the full standards to existing businesses.

The standards should assure all parties that "the airport will play fairly with all businesses," NATA explained in its comments. "As the FAA has recommended in the past, NATA believes that once the airport sponsor has established minimum standards, it should apply them objectively and uniformly to all similar on-airport aeronautical activities and services, new or established." ■

More NATA on next page ▶

The AIE Booths

Avfuel promotes QA and fire safety seminar

Denver will be the site of Avfuel's next regional quality assurance and fire safety seminar. The free presentation will be held on April 17 and 18 and is 14 CFR Part 139 approved. Representatives of the company will be at Booth No. 1416 to discuss

the program, which includes the refining process and fuel properties; paperwork issues; fuel quality testing and safety; issues surrounding leaks, spills and contaminations; and fire training. The seminar includes a hands-on exercise at a local airport.

Avfuel will also be showcasing, Avtrip, its pilot loyalty program. According to an Avfuel spokesman, last year pilots earned more than 350 million Avtrip points and \$3.5

million in savings bonds. The number of pilots actively participating in the program averages 15,000 each quarter.

Dallas Airmotive features new AOG mobile response van

Building on the success of its first AOG Mobile Response Team (MRT) vehicle deployed a little over six months ago in the Northeast, Dallas Airmotive is

exhibiting its newest MRT vehicle at Booth No. 1406. Outfitted for on-site AOG services on engines and APUs, the 30-foot-long vehicle will be based out of the company's West Palm Beach



Mobile response van

Regional Turbine Center and available 24/7 for AOG and scheduled repair.

Last August, the company initiated mobile service in the Northeast with an APU repair van dispatched from its Millville, N.J. repair station. Its focus is repair and troubleshooting, including on-site hot section, on Honeywell 36-series APUs. The popularity of that service encouraged Dallas Airmotive to expand the serv-

ice capabilities of the van to include field service work such as PW305 IBR inspections and AOG service in the Southeast. The newest AOG van offers APU hot section inspection and repair, troubleshooting, video-scope/borescope inspection, starter clutch replacement, generator pad seal replacement, LRU removal and replacement, onboard rental APU, PW305

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NATA

No refund request, no trust fund transfer

NATA continues to work on what its staffers say is one of the most vexing problems they have ever encountered: the fuel fraud tax, part of the Highway Bill that took effect on Oct. 1, 2005. "We are going to aggressively push this year to have the tax rescinded," said Eric Byer, NATA vice president for government and industry affairs. The fuel fraud tax repeal is in limbo, awaiting efforts that will dovetail with reauthorization of the FAA budget and the user fee battles surrounding that issue.

The tax came about because senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) became convinced that criminals were stealing jet fuel and converting it for use in cars and trucks, thus cheating the government of taxes on the diesel fuel that otherwise would have been purchased. Grassley believes there is a discrepancy between the amount of jet fuel produced and imported to the U.S. and the amount the airlines use. (His statement about this subject doesn't mention general aviation jet fuel users.) He is correct that there are cases of fuel fraud in the U.S. For example, a group of workers at Miami International Airport was caught classifying jet fuel as contaminated, then reselling the fuel. According to Grassley, this group stole 2.7 million gallons of fuel.

"The allegations of widespread theft, conspiracy and kickbacks are shocking," Grassley said. "What's even more shocking is that this scene is played out all over the country, probably every day. The federal taxpayers lose \$1 billion a year to fuel fraud, and probably half of that is in jet fuel fraud. Those who steal fuel aren't paying federal excise taxes. In addition to the tax loss, it's a national security risk for dangerous jet fuel to move around with no accountability."

Grassley, chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance, developed a convoluted solution to this problem. Jet fuel is normally taxed at 21.9 cents per gallon (cpg), while highway diesel fuel is taxed at 24.4 cpg. The 21.9 cents for jet fuel used to go directly to the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, which pays for FAA operations and airport improvements.

The Highway Bill requires jet fuel to be taxed at 24.4 cpg, all of which is deposited directly into the Highway

Trust Fund until an appropriate party, called the ultimate registered vendor (usually the FBO), applies for a refund of the extra 2.5 cpg. Only after the ultimate vendor makes the application to the Internal Revenue Service does the remaining 21.9 cpg get returned to the Airport and Airway Trust Fund and the 2.5 cpg is returned to the vendor.

If the vendor does not make the application, not only does someone (the aircraft operator or the FBO) lose the 2.5 cpg, but the Highway Trust Fund is richer (and the aviation trust fund poorer) by 21.9 cpg. NATA calculated that the Highway Trust Fund will grow by hundreds of millions of dollars as a result of this plan.

The reimbursement process through the IRS has also been a huge burden on the aviation industry. According to Byer, the IRS wasn't ready to handle the transactions when the Highway Bill became law and took about a year to start handling applications efficiently.

In a survey conducted for NATA last year by the Aviation Management Consulting Group of fuel providers, who handle about 270,000 gallons of jet fuel per month, more than half of the respondents said they had to wait two to six months for IRS approval. One-third had not received IRS approval by the time of the survey, although 76 percent had already applied for approval. Refunds from the IRS are taking 60 to 90 days, Byer said. "We're trying to put pressure on the IRS. It's taking too long."

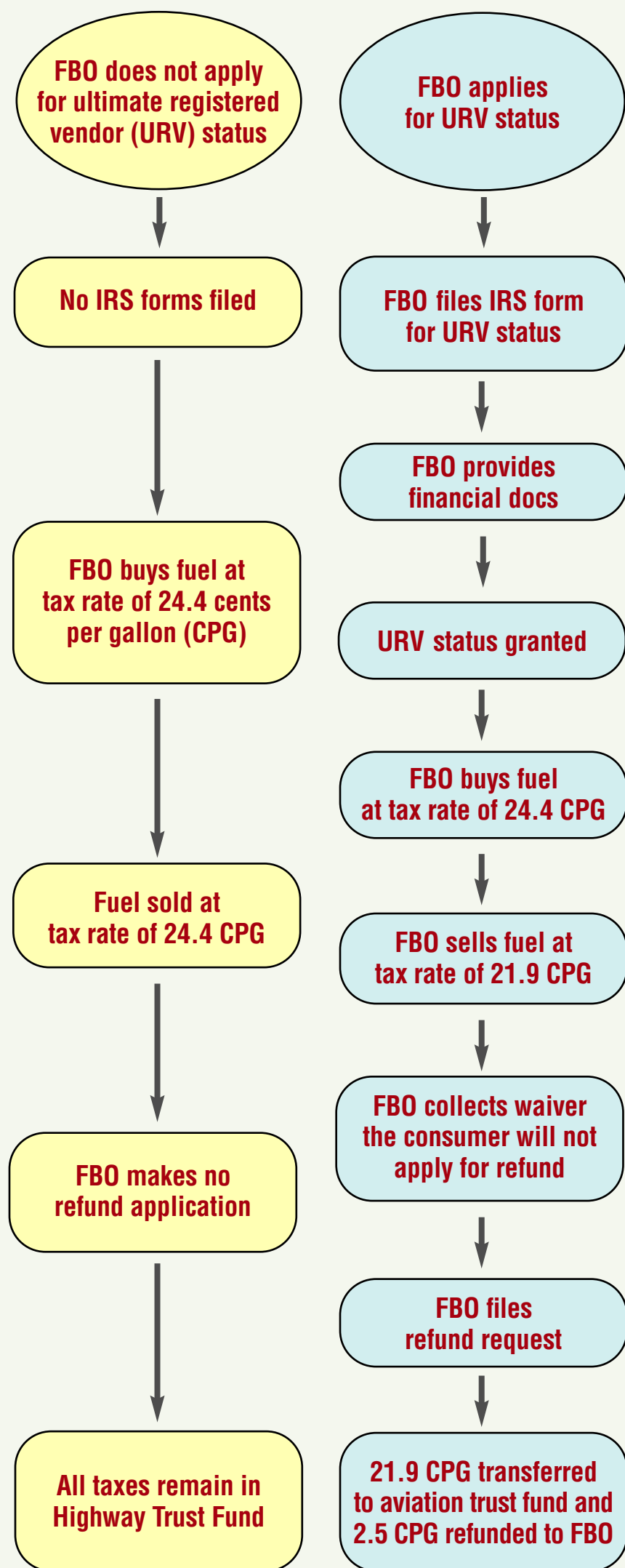
NATA's goal is to have the added 2.5-cpg fuel tax rescinded, and it's one of the association's top agenda items for the current fight over FAA reauthorization funding. "Either rescind it entirely," Byer said, "or find a way to ease the burden." One solution would be to have the fuel distributor certify the jet fuel supply chain instead of burdening FBOs with applying for tax refunds because politicians are worried that the Highway Trust Fund is losing money to jet fuel robbers.

The real theft, according to NATA president James Coyne, is that aviation trust fund money is being diverted to the Highway Trust Fund. Some of that will never be returned to its rightful place in the aviation industry because some ultimate registered vendor elected not to endure the hassle of signing up with the IRS and applying for the 2.5-cpg refund. More troublesome, however, is that this is occurring at a time when the government is proposing to burden the aviation industry with user fees to pay for the FAA because some in the government think that the aviation trust fund is running low on money. ■



NATA v-p Eric Byer said the association is working to have the fuel fraud tax rescinded.

Fuel Tax Refund Process



Source: NATA

The AIE Booths

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IBR on-wing inspection and AOG line repair.

The vehicle is a repair shop on wheels and includes such equipment as an engine hoist, workbench, tooling, AC generator, rental APU, field-level repair inventory, LRUs, videoscope/borescope, environmental control, side and rear door access and lift gate.

A Winslow life raft for all

Winslow LifeRaft will be displaying examples of its corporate aviation life rafts at Booth No. 1553. The company has developed life raft packaging options that suit its product to the interior of virtually any aircraft. According to David Patrick Williams, senior technical representative, "The variety of available hard packs is constantly increasing and valise packs continue to be custom dimensionally packed at a customer's request."

The Lake Suzy, Fla. company also offers survival equipment packs in full compliance with all new regulations, including Part 91, Part 135, JAR-OPS, CAR and CAA. All equipment packs include the Katedyn reverse osmosis water maker. The Winslow/DME triple-frequency 406-MHz ELT is also offered for all life rafts and standardized for all JAR-OPS operators as well as Part 135 operators flying into Europe.



Winslow life raft

GFS offers paint booth and oven technology

Global Finishing Solutions (GFS) of Osseo, Wis., will be offering information on its line of custom-designed paint booths and ovens at Booth No. 1340.

According to company president Rich Thelen, GFS offers booths ranging in size from small enough to efficiently paint aircraft parts such as flaps, landing gear and interior parts to booths large enough to accommodate whole aircraft. Current projects under way include paint booths for heavy transports, fighters, business jets and medium transports such as 737s.

"We have special designs to fit any application," Thelen said. "We sell more than 5,000 paint booths a year to auto refinishing, general industrial, aviation and automotive customers worldwide."

Aviation Skills Matrix offers new job-search technology

If you've come to the conclusion that sending out résumés isn't an effective job-search strategy, stop by Booth No. 1566 and learn how Aviation Skills Matrix has brought the process into the digital age.

Aviation Skills Matrix is a monthly fee-based online program that lets users present their skills, training and proficiencies to a greater extent than a paper résumé allows. The StaReport offers a standardized format that contains contact information, military records, employment preferences, graphic displays of equipment and industry-specific ratings summaries.

The ratings are based on a defined proficiency scale from 0 to 9. The individual uses self-evaluations to apply the ratings to equipment and skills particular to his experience. He can also

include FAA certifications, training and education records. The résumé and major accomplishment sections provide room for employment history and any additional achievements.

Duncan Aviation touts Battle Creek facility expansion

Duncan Aviation of Lincoln, Neb., will be highlighting its expanding services and facilities in Booth No. 1233 at AIE. Photos of the Duncan Aviation Glass Box Project cockpit solutions will be on display, as will interior features designed by Duncan

Design, the firm's in-house design team. The company will also have information about its recent \$20 million Battle Creek, Mich. facility expansion.

Aircraft Window Repairs giving away inspection prism Kit

Aircraft Window Repairs of Torrance, Calif., will have a drawing at Booth No. 1455 for an AWR P-17 Inspection Prism Kit. Technicians will be available to discuss the company's newest service: overhaul of Hawker 700 and earlier navigation light lenses.

Alberth Aviation will show wheel service dolly

Alberth Aviation of Tomball, Texas, is introducing a new wheel service dolly with hydraulic action to lift larger wheels for easy wheel changing and to prevent back injuries that can result from changing larger corporate jet wheels.

According to the company, on the new dolly the wheel is lifted from the outside edges on adjustable rollers to allow easy alignment. The dolly, which includes toll/jack storage trays, is on display at Booth No. 1076. ■