

## **Experience Does Matter; Entry-Level Pilots Need More - Not Less - Hand Flying Prior to Being Hired by Regional Airlines**

Buffalo, New York - January 21st, 2016 - Responding to a Department of Transportation Inspector General report that raised concerns about the increased reliance on automation in the cockpit and its potential effect on the manual flying skills of our nation's commercial airline pilots, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' reminded Congress of the importance of preserving recently-enacted requirements that call for young pilots to attain higher levels of experience prior to being hired by regional airlines.

"While this report certainly challenges the FAA, airlines, and all stakeholders to have a heightened awareness of the manual flying skills of the population of those pilots already employed by commercial airlines, it also should serve as a stark reminder to those who are pressuring Congress to rush young pilots into regional airline cockpits using any shortcut possible," stated John Kausner of Clarence Center, New York, who lost his twenty-year-old daughter Ellyce as Flight 3407 crashed less than a mile from her family's home. "Recent crashes, including Flight 3407, show the importance of pilots being properly prepared to react to adverse situations without the benefit of autopilot. This underlines the value of entry-level pilots gaining more, not less, hand-flying experience on the front end of their careers prior to jumping into the highly automated cockpit of a regional airliner. It should also raise concerns about the ab initio concept of training that is being put forth at this time, which seemingly overemphasizes training focused on the use of automation at the expense of manual flying skills. All in all, this report strengthens the argument in support of the more stringent entry-level experience requirements unanimously passed by Congress back in 2010."

The Inspector General's study, which admonished the FAA for not doing enough to "ensure that air carriers sufficiently address pilot monitoring and manual flying skills," cited five recent studies by the Flight Safety Foundation, NASA, and two FAA-commissioned panels. These studies called into question the ability of today's commercial airline pilot to maintain manual hand-flying capabilities, and whether FAA and the airlines are doing enough to promote this consensus best practice. The findings and recommendations in these studies were supported by the results of the IG auditing multiple commercial airlines and finding inconsistencies in how they promoted and tracked training opportunities geared towards both pilot monitoring and manual flying.

"Last week marked the seven year anniversary of the Miracle on the Hudson, and that only underscores the importance of manual flying skills being emphasized from Day One of a pilot's development," stated Susan Bourque of East Aurora, New York, who lost her sister Beverly

Eckert, a prominent 9/11 widow and activist. "What Captain Sullenberger and First Officer Skiles were able to accomplish is a testament to our mantra that 'Experience Matters.' As the House and Senate prepare to take up the FAA Reauthorization Bill in the upcoming weeks and months, we call on Senators Thune and Nelson, and Congressmen Shuster and DeFazio, to ensure that the higher safety standards for our nation's regional carriers brought about by Flight 3407 and the regional airline tragedies that preceded it are preserved and strengthened by this bill."