

CALLBACK

From NASA's Aviation Safety Reporting System



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Fly-Ins and Airshows



Fly-ins and airshows are great fun and camaraderie for everyone, whether you are a fly-in participant, airshow performer, or spectator who comes for the thrills. Much is available to experience, learn, and enjoy. Beautiful aircraft of all vintages and types are exhibited on the ground and many are demonstrated in flight, while their pilots are only too happy to talk shop. Seminars, presentations, and educational materials are offered, and vendors promote the very latest in aviation art and technology. In short, airshows and fly-ins are exciting, super-charged aviation experiences.

Hazards to flight operations, however, can be multiplied and magnified during these events. High density traffic and separation, communication, complicated publications, unfamiliar procedures, and weather are challenges. Others also exist, but stakeholders and sponsors take extra precautions to promote and maximize every aspect of flight safety. With some simple web searches, safety information regarding fly-ins and airshows is easily obtained. FAA issues specialized NOTAMs that prescribe unique flight procedures for events such as the Oshkosh EAA AirVenture or the Lakeland Sun 'n Fun Aerospace Expo. NTSB Safety Alert SA-053 highlights flight safety issues that a pilot may experience at these and similar events. EAA offers a webinar for Oshkosh, and AOPA provides safety information as well.

This month, *CALLBACK* reviews reported fly-in incidents and problems. Consider these candid, thought provoking narratives, and recognize the important lessons they reveal.

Conflict, Distraction, Deviation, and Discipline

This homebuilt aircraft pilot experienced distraction and confusion after an airborne conflict during the arrival. The pilot's rationale for the resulting deviation is shared.

■ *I was flying the Fisk approach into the Oshkosh airshow and established at 85 to 90 knots indicated airspeed and 1,800 feet MSL. A PA-28 passed me closely to my right, overtaking me and cutting in front of me. In the confusion that ensued in avoiding a collision, I overflew the controllers at Fisk, and my passenger said he believed the "wing rock" [radio transmission] was for us. I was already too far from Fisk for them to see my wing rock. I proceeded to Runway 36L, and upon reaching short final and committed to land,*

I did not get a clearance specifically for a [colored] dot. Going around was deemed far more dangerous than just landing and vacating the runway due to the incredible traffic density and my good traffic separation at the time. The discipline by pilots during the arrival was poor at best.

Beehive Behavior

A Piper PA-28 pilot identified several difficult-to-mitigate Oshkosh fly-in hazards. They were likely instrumental in this near miss airborne conflict while flying the arrival.

■ *I [began] the Fisk arrival at Ripon heading to Fisk. Traffic was extremely busy. My concentration was out...front trying to maintain separation from other aircraft trying to get in to Oshkosh. Out of the corner of my eye to the left, I caught a light-colored aircraft approaching directly toward me and a little high in a left turn to intersect my path. He passed directly overhead by 20 feet, and I believe he slowed down and settled in behind me. Since the Piper doesn't have rear windows, I could not see where he went. Evasive action wasn't safe, as there were planes near me, some at lower altitudes.*

I believe the problem was caused by a chain of events:

1. *The temporary Approach ATC didn't like the bunched-up gaggle of planes and told everyone at Fisk to turn left, go around, and try setting up again. They wanted us to be safe, but what you ended up with was 40 to 50 planes all turning left at the same time in uncontrolled airspace. Some adhered to the NOTAM and followed procedures, some did not. If anything, we were in a very unsafe environment.*

2. *As time went on, pilots were getting angry and trying to get to Oshkosh at any cost. That's where all the maverick moves were done to cut in line. Sometimes we had very good separation in front of us, and someone would see that as a hole to fill with their airplane and ruin it for us. Perhaps that's what the [conflicting aircraft] was doing.*

3. *I am guessing that the [conflicting aircraft] may not have seen us since he was a little higher and starting into a turn. The pilot was on the left side, and we were on his right.*

4. *The weather was...below VFR minimums in the morning. When it lifted, everyone was trying to get to the same place.*

I think something has to be done to rework the arrival into Oshkosh for AirVenture week. There were literally hundreds

of planes in very tight proximity to each other trying to squeeze into one arrival path. ... It would be nice if [ATC issued] more IFR arrivals. ... The VFR approach method isn't working with the amount of traffic that this event has grown to. ... Lastly, ATC can't wash their hands of us when they tell everyone to go back to Ripon and try it again. They are sending us out there among pilots of varying levels of competency and in very close proximity to remain clear of each other. There are too many planes in that situation to reliably keep track of, and they aren't all following the NOTAM's procedure.

Risk and Reward in 20/20 Hindsight

This multiple-option arrival plan flirted with self-induced hazards and unnecessary flight risks. Fortunately, the arrival was successful, and lessons were eventually perceived.

■ I tried to get an IFR reservation to Oshkosh but could not because they were all taken. I chose to get an IFR reservation to C47, a nearby airport, with the plan to shoot an instrument approach to Runway 18 at C47, then either plan A: land and wait for weather to turn VFR and continue from there to Oshkosh via the visual approach in the Oshkosh NOTAM (Ripon to Fisk, then direct Oshkosh), or plan B: if I broke out visually on the approach to C47, then fly visually to Oshkosh via Ripon and Fisk per NOTAM. ... On the approach, I did break out visually at about 1,400 feet MSL before reaching minimums. I then elected to fly at 1,400 feet MSL to Ripon to try the visual approach. The problem was that cloud bases were ragged and less than 100 feet above me. I had no cloud separation, barely keeping clear of clouds and barely 400 to 500 feet AGL. I rationalized that this was OK because of the special circumstances of AirAdventure procedures at Oshkosh. Fortunately, everything worked out, and conditions improved to VFR after I passed Fisk inbound to the Oshkosh traffic pattern. ... I was taking a risk by scud running in such a narrow margin and declaring my own Special VFR without ATC permission. I did have ADS-B out onboard, but that does not show all traffic. Worst case, I could have collided with another plane which was also scud running nearby or hit a tower or wires. I should have landed at C47 and waited patiently for weather to get better between C47 and Fisk before proceeding to Oshkosh.

Taxi Turmoil

While under flagmen's directions, this pilot experienced an unexpected taxi threat. A quick reaction prevented a collision, but a better idea was conceived after the fact.

■ I was following a flagman's direction while taxiing south on the parallel taxiway near show center. A twin-engine

aircraft that I'd been following turned off of the taxiway, opening approximately a 100-yard gap between me and the next aircraft in front of me. Flagmen waved me to accelerate to close that gap. A ramp worker [wearing] an orange vest and mounted on a small scooter crossed the ramp about 75 yards in front of me, moving from my right to my left. I expected that he would continue across the taxiway to the turf on the other side, but I was surprised when he, instead, turned on the edge of the paved ramp and motored straight toward me. I began braking, but there was still a brief period where it felt like we were playing chicken.

Afraid that there wouldn't be clearance between the oncoming scooter driver and my left...wing tip, I swerved pretty hard to my right near...the right...edge of the taxiway. At almost the same instant, he swerved to his own right and pulled off the taxiway onto the turf. I estimate that we cleared each other by about 10 to 20 feet.

I was trying to keep moving so as not to interfere with the busy Oshkosh ground traffic flow. In retrospect, however, I wish that I'd braked hard to a complete stop at the moment... the scooter driver surprised me by turning onto a possible collision course, and then waited for the conflict to resolve while sitting in a static position.

It's Not Over Until It's Over

After departing the fly-in, this pilot encountered a surprise on the return flight home. The incident was complicated by a relaxation of concentration and discipline after the show.

■ I was flying eastbound to Maryland returning from Oshkosh at 11,000 feet on an IFR flight plan. My autopilot disconnected and revealed an out-of-trim condition, which caused the aircraft to yaw to the left. I had stretched my right leg to the right of the cockpit for comfort. When the aircraft yawed, I instinctively pressed my right foot on the rudder pedal. This caused the aircraft to yaw even more to the left, requiring full right aileron to keep from rolling inverted. I turned the autopilot off and released the rudder trim with no effect. I also reduced power and lowered the nose to get better control, advising ATC that I was turning and descending with a flight control problem. ATC advised me that Cambridge Airport was ahead about ten miles (I had turned about 120 degrees to the left, so I was heading northwest instead of east. As I continued to troubleshoot, I noted that my right foot was pressing on the copilot's left rudder pedal instead of the pilot's right rudder pedal. As soon as I got my foot on the correct rudder pedal, I was able to control the aircraft and advised ATC. I continued the flight to Maryland. ... I am just glad that I was able to keep flying the aircraft until I found what the problem was - Me!!

ASRS Alerts Issued in April 2021	
Subject of Alert	No. of Alerts
Aircraft or Aircraft Equipment	5
Airport Facility or Procedure	6
ATC Equipment or Procedure	9
TOTAL	20

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 A Monthly Safety
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April 2021 Report Intake	
Air Carrier/Air Taxi Pilots	3,575
General Aviation Pilots	1,350
Flight Attendants	716
Controllers	318
Military/Other	272
Mechanics	206
Dispatchers	120
TOTAL	6,557