



January 28, 2018

2018 PAMEA Presidents message

I watched with interest this week the trial of three men accused of negligence that killed 47 people and destroying the town of Lac-Mégantic in Quebec.

These three men were regular employees doing their job the way they have always done it.

They have lived this trial for the last 5 years. They have wondered for those last 5 years if they will spend the rest of their lives in prison.

I see a comparison of aviation employees who live their lives complying with regulations and the forces around those regulations.

Every time an AME performs a job, and ultimately signs a log book, they could find themselves in the same position as the 3 employees that worked for that railway. Every time a pilot takes an unairworthy airplane on a flight, or does not report a defect that exists or works on the airplane without telling anyone, they put themselves in the same position as those 3 rail employees.

Yet people in aviation break the rules every day, and if they stand up to the company that owns the plane or the boss that runs the company, they are at risk of losing their job. So they compromise, they take a risk, "it will never happen to me", or "I've never seen this happen and I have been working in the industry for 30 years and bla, bla, bla."

The fact is every time you touch an airplane, or sign a log book you put yourself at risk. How many people out there work on private airplanes without any liability insurance, or do a small job for a friend. Or they moonlight at another company to earn extra money, not knowing if they are covered by any sort of insurance or protected from liability. How many people do you know who have lost their job because they would not perform a job or sign a log book. A lot of licensed people think they are protected because they sign with an ACA. Don't fool yourself the company won't protect you, the lawyers will find out who you are.

Who does an AME turn to when they have a legal question? There is the coffee shop people with their great amount of knowledge, rightly or wrongly interpreted. There is self-study, open up the CARs on the internet and interpret it yourself. Or just do it the way you've always done it, and hope for the best.

You cannot turn to your local Transport Canada representative any more, the doors are locked, and probably for good reason. The fact is for the lonely AME there is no one to turn to for legal or practical advice.

That is why a good association, well positioned with the ability to go to the authorities with questions and interpretations of the CARs. That is why the AME Associations need to be stronger and have the ability to hire legal representation for their members. We used to have legal assistance available but that was dropped in favour of having large social gatherings with sandwiches and booze.

The AME Associations across Canada are trying to get the strength in numbers to provide a source of assistance to AME's working in the field, yet only a very small fraction of AME;s realize the benefits of belonging to a professional association. The companies they work for do not encourage their employees to belong, because an informed employee may not do the bidding of the company.

I urge every AME in this business to explore the benefits of a professional association, be a part of the solution not a part of the problem, take your head out of the sand and do something, better yet, volunteer to take a role in running the association. There is a shortage of skilled workers in the aviation industry, young people are staying away from the training schools and choosing to do something else. The moneys no good and there is no future in the aircraft maintenance industry. There is no pride in the profession. We are at a turning point where we can make a difference.

Let's hope the new executive of PAMEA can make some changes, attract new members and provide new direction for aircraft maintenance workers in the industry.

Bob Rorison, Retiring PAMEA President