



# THE VIEW FROM WASHINGTON

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## Avionics is International

Every so often, I have to stop and admire the scope of the AEA and just how truly international the organization has become. I'm writing this month's column at 35,000 feet over the Atlantic Ocean as I commute to Cologne, Germany, for an EASA working group meeting regarding avionics engineer licensing (B-2). This trip follows AEA meetings I attended in Canada and Australia recently and it comes before additional AEA meetings in the United States.

In the 30 days of September, I was in four countries on three continents, worked in five different time zones, and met with representatives of six separate national aviation authorities.

During these busy months of the AEA's fall travel season, I sit in awe of the technology that not only allows the association staff to thrive and prosper in the international marketplace, but also your businesses. The tools we use today, allowing us to communicate, negotiate and meet with our customers in a new way, amaze me — not to mention the technology that allows an engineering firm to operate in a virtual office with engineers around the world all corroborating on a project simultaneously.

My trip to the AEA South Pacific Meeting in Australia reminded me of my first flight Down Under more than 10 years ago. I was sitting on a 14-hour, non-stop Qantas 747 flight from Los Angeles to Sydney

reading about the early days of aviation and the first transcontinental flight: New York to Los Angeles in just three days.

In slightly more than 60 years, we went from traveling between the East Coast and West Coast of the U.S. in three days to doing so in slightly more than five hours, and the transit time between the U.S. and Australia was reduced from 15 days to 15 hours. By the way, if you are ever in Sydney, the Australian National Maritime Mu-

— in real time. Today, we barcode the forms and wirelessly upload the completed task and have our maintenance scheduling software updated in seconds instead of hours — in real time.

Today, I'm e-mailing my articles for *Avionics News* to the AEA publishing offices from half-way around the world; communicating via VOIP with members and authorities around the world; instant messaging dinner plans with working group members

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seum is a nice place to visit. On display is an interesting chart that tracked the average travel time between Europe and Australia based on travel technology.

Technology is moving at mind-boggling pace. In the late 1970s, I was working with one of the early aircraft maintenance tracking software programs. It was a breakthrough application because it allowed us to have "real-time" maintenance scheduling. All we had to do was enter our completed maintenance forms into our computer, then have it "dial" into the mainframe in a Washington, D.C., suburb, and by the next morning, we could have our maintenance report

from five different countries in a single text; and forwarding the office phone to my mobile phone so government affairs business is uninterrupted during my travels. Technology is amazing!

The AEA represents membership in 39 countries through advocacy, training, access and leadership. Did you know the AEA has regulatory staff based in Europe, Canada, Australia and the United States? While I am based in Washington, D.C., with a satellite office in Cologne, the AEA has a team based around the world to support the membership. In addition to paid part-time consultants, AEA leadership also includes

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volunteer directors from Europe, Canada and Australia.

While we regularly work with the international aviation regulatory community regarding global issues, most of the issues we deal with are initiated because of regional concerns, which often end up being of concern internationally. These issues might seem mostly regional in the minds of the membership, but they often are global when it comes to their impact on the industry.

When I first worked on the FAA's Changed Product Rule, it was because of the effect it would have on a U.S. repair station's ability to perform in-service changes to aircraft. However, this was a harmonized regulation with direct participation from Transport Canada and the JAA, as well as the FAA and the industry. Today, this rule directly or indirectly affects every member who performs aftermarket upgrades of avionics and electronics systems.

The EASA rulemaking working group in which I am participating is revising the Part 66 licensing regulation to adopt a progressive licensing scheme that promotes employment in general aviation shops. While this is primarily an alternative licensing approach within the countries of the European Union in support of aviation small businesses, the results of the group's work will have a far-reaching impact in the international communities that base their regulations on the European model.

Earlier this month at the annual AEA Canada Meeting, the association presented the first in a series of training programs regarding safety management systems. We have been working on SMS and the impact it will have on the maintenance industry since Canada first introduced the concept. During our AEA South Pacific Meeting, we shared some of the lessons learned and the best practices from Canada with our membership in the South Pacific and with Australia's Civil Aviation Safety Authority.

In addition, *Avionics News* has been publishing a series about cost-effective implementation of SMS for the maintenance community. On the AEA website, there are pages dedicated to SMS to help our membership worldwide understand and implement a cost-effective, regulatory-compliant SMS program. Later this year, we will begin training U.S. shops to help them make the transition based on the lessons learned from Canada, as well as the results of our efforts with FAA rulemaking activity.

The good news for the European membership is, by the time EASA puts forward its proposal (which, based on the ICAO's mandate, should be soon), the AEA should have a complete package that has been tested in three other regions of the world.

And let's not forget about the communications, navigation and surveillance systems of the FAA's Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) and Eu-

rope's Single European Sky ATM Research (SESAR). It is increasingly important for CNS requirements to be harmonized and the standards accepted internationally, allowing the next generation of avionics to be marketed internationally. International marketing of standard avionics products will enhance competition and sales, which will allow for certification costs to be amortized against a greater volume of sales.

The continued regional certification of avionics must end. Partly because of digital technology and commercially available sub-assemblies, avionics components are increasingly less expensive to manufacture, but increasingly more difficult and expensive to certify. While all of the national aviation authorities must modernize their individual certification processes, the international market demands the easing of borders and the allowance for importation and installation of proven and certified products from around the world.

The AEA would like mutual acceptance of U.S., European and Canadian TSO'd articles to be included in the Bilateral Aviation Safety Agreements, allowing for the free flow of certified products throughout the industry regardless of the approving authority.

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