



## **Recurrent Training**

Bob Wander

The Soaring Safety Foundation's "First Flight" Program

Recurrent training for flight crews is pursued by every scheduled air carrier (United, Northwest, American, Delta, and so on) every six months. This is the recurrent training schedule for pilots who generally fly around 70-80 hours a month, every month, as vocational, professional, full-time pilots.

I have observed, for four to six hours each time, many episodes of airline recurrent ground training and recurrent 3-axis full-motion simulator training. It is a tremendous pleasure to watch the flight crew work to become the best that they can be on currency / proficiency / emergency recognition and response. They do NOT stop training in the simulator the moment they hit a minimum standard of performance! They continue on. They use their allotted sim time to work problem after problem after problem until they have achieved the best proficiency they can possibly achieve. It's a real workout.

I have also been fortunate to observe Space Shuttle simulator training in Houston at the Johnson Space Center there. They also train to the highest performance standard achievable. Modern military pilots also strive for this goal in their recurrent training (although decades ago this was not necessarily true, it is nowadays. See for yourself: Ask any current military aviator about the recurrent training program they undergo. It is VERY comprehensive).

This is worth repeating: All of these professional aviators train to their BEST standard of performance, not just a MINIMUM standard. I believe that training to BEST standard of performance is the Holy Grail of recurrent training.

In general aviation, the prevailing attitude about recurrent training is very different from the attitude that prevails in the airlines, the space program, and the military. Many GA pilots view recurrent training as a test of their abilities, rather than viewing it as an opportunity to expand and refine their abilities to the highest standard of performance that they can achieve.

The Soaring Safety Foundation developed and promoted the idea of First Flight each season, being a flight with a CFIG. Naturally, ground consultation with the CFI-Glider will result in an agreed-upon plan of action for the flight portion of the recurrent training. I hope that each First Flight pilot will participate in recurrent training in the spirit of the professional aviators described above. Recurrent training is the ideal time to bring a list of things that you would like to improve in your flying to the CFI-G and work with the CFI-G to raise your performance level in each scenario, or procedure, or maneuver that you have on your list. If you do so, I believe that you will discover in the First Flight program the opportunity to improve your aviation decision-making skills and your flight skills also. And in that you will take both pleasure and pride.

Thanks and safe soaring,  
Bob Wander

