

First Fee-Based Regional Pilot Proficiency Project™

Conducted by the
Society of Aviation and Flight Educators

In Cooperation with
Redbird Flight Simulations, Starr Aviation, & Sennheiser Aviation

San Marcos, Texas, October 26–27, 2013

10 November 2013



The logo for the Pilot Proficiency Project is centered on a bright yellow sunburst background. The word "PILOT" is written in a blue, sans-serif font at the top. Below it, the word "PROFICIENCY" is written in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the word "PROJECT" is written in a blue, sans-serif font, followed by a trademark symbol (™).

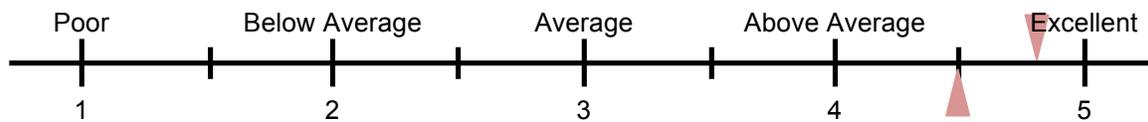
www.SafePilots.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Society of Aviation and Flight Educators (SAFE) conducted its first Regional Pilot Proficiency Project™ (PPP) at Skyport in San Marcos, Texas on October 25–26, 2013. Conceived by SAFE in 2010 and based on prior projects offered during several national aviation events, this first regional event was made possible by registration fees paid by a total of twenty-eight participants, as well as sponsorship by SAFE, Redbird Flight Simulations (Redbird), Starr Aviation, and Sennheiser Aviation.

Four presenters conducted seven seminars over the two-day event. Seminars ranged from 90 minutes to three hours in duration and addressed the following safety of flight topics: Single-Pilot IFR, Stick and Rudder Skills in Glass Cockpits, Human Factors in Loss of Control, iPad Best Practices using ForeFlight, Tailwheel Tips and Tricks, Angle of Attack Awareness, and GPS: Beyond the Basics. Three simulator instructors provided 12 training sessions in Redbird simulators as well, with nine choosing to train with legacy round gage instrument panels, and three choosing G1000 glass panels. Presenters and simulator instructors received stipends to help offset their time and travel.

Participants, most of whom attended both days, were invited to respond to an online survey after the event. Seventeen (61 percent) responded by the deadline. The statement, “Compared to the cost to attend, please rate the value you feel you received” earned a **4.8 out of a possible 5.0**. This is consistent with the **4.5 out of 5.0** aggregate score for all seminars and simulator sessions, as illustrated on the following scale:



Given the strongly positive feedback from participants, SAFE is exploring additional venues, resources, and recommendations for future fee-based, Regional PPP events.

ABOUT SAFE

Founded in 2009 as a member-centric, professional organization for aviation educators, SAFE is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt public charity. The organization’s mission includes seeking a reduction in aviation accidents, increasing professionalism among aviation educators, and lifelong learning by everyone involved in aviation.

SAFE currently has more than 800 members, including the majority of the country’s Master Instructors as well as many recipients of General Aviation Awards at the local, regional, and national levels. SAFE’s proactive spirit is embodied in a number of initiatives it has undertaken since its founding, including:

- Providing a Premier Flight Instructor Liability Insurance Program for SAFE Members
- Developing and Managing an Aviation Educator Mentoring Program for SAFE Members
- Hosting the Pilot Training Reform Symposium
- Creating the Flight Instructor Open Forum Series for the FAA Safety Team
- Providing Expertise to the GA Joint Steering and Aviation Rulemaking Committees

ABOUT THE PILOT PROFICIENCY PROJECT™

The genesis of SAFE's Pilot Proficiency Project began as a series of discussions among SAFE members during EAA AirVenture 2010. An informal survey of potential forum speakers from among the SAFE membership revealed considerable interest in participating as well. Discussions with potential sponsors, Redbird, and EAA ensued in 2011.

The proof-of-concept project debuted during AirVenture 2012. As envisioned by SAFE, the project offered targeted forums and simulator training sessions to pilots that addressed key safety of flight topics. Eleven pre-programmed simulator training scenarios were co-developed by SAFE and Redbird educators, including engine failures during takeoff, overshoots during base-to-final, and approaches to minimums with a tailwind. Follow-on projects were conducted during AOPA Summit in 2012 and Sun-n-Fun, Women in Aviation, and AirVenture in 2013.

The next step in the evolution of the PPP concept was to conduct fee-based events across the U.S. For logistical reasons involving the easy availability of Redbird simulators, Skyport in San Marcos, Texas was chosen as the site for the first Regional PPP.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS & MOTIVATION

The average age of survey respondents was 58 years old. Twenty-five percent were private pilots; 44 percent were commercial pilots; and 31 percent were airline transport pilots. Sixty-five percent held instrument ratings; 65 percent held flight instructor certificates; and 35 percent held ground instructor certificates. Fifty-three percent were also tailwheel qualified. One participant was a designated pilot examiner.

Regarding the primary reason for attending the event, 53 percent selected seminars and simulator sessions together, while 47 percent chose seminars only. Interestingly, 76 percent of respondents believe that the event could be conducted successfully without the simulator component.

One hundred percent indicated they would attend similar events in the future, with 41 percent indicating they would attend at least twice per year, 35 percent indicating annual attendance, and 24 percent uncertain about their attendance frequency.

ONLINE REGISTRATION PROCESS

SAFE used a third party, online service to manage the event registration and payment process. Participants rated the overall ease of online registration as *Above Average* (3.9 out of 5.0). One hundred percent thought there was a "good mix" of available options. In terms of pricing strategy, 12 percent thought a "per session" (i.e., per seminar and per simulator session) option would be the most appealing, 38 percent thought "package pricing" would be the most appealing, and 56 percent thought having both per session and package pricing options would be the most appealing.

TRAVEL RADIUS

Fifty-six percent of participants traveled to the event site by private airplane compared to 38 percent who traveled by automobile. Weather, however, caused one participant to travel by automobile rather than private airplane. The travel radius appeared to be mostly within 300 miles of the event location. The majority of respondents, however, noted that they would have traveled even farther to attend, including several who indicated a willingness to travel 1,000 miles or more to attend this type of event.

EVENT FORMAT, FACILITY, & FOOD

Participants rated the overall format of the event as *Excellent* (4.6 out of 5.0). Eighty-eight percent thought the length of the days was “about right,” while just 12 percent felt the days were too long.

The facility was rated as *Excellent* (4.9 out of 5.0). The quality and selection of the food provided was *Above Average* (3.7 out of 5.0).

CLASS SIZE

Seminar class size for this fee-based event was projected to be 50 participants. Ultimately, 28 registered, with 15 participants attending both days of the event, five attending one of the days, and eight attending individual seminars.

One hundred percent of the participants indicated that their experience was enhanced by the smaller class sizes. When asked what an optimum class size might be, 76 percent answered 25 or fewer, while 24 percent answered 25 to 50. Eighty-one percent were also interested in breakout sessions.

SIMULATOR SESSIONS

Of the 28 participants, 12 signed up for a training session in a Redbird simulator. Most opted for the legacy round gage instrument panel. Overall, participants in the simulator sessions rated their instructors as *Excellent* (4.9 out of 5.0) and the simulator session itself as *Above Average* (4.1 out of 5.0). The composite score for the simulator experience bordered *Above Average-to-Excellent* (4.5 out of 5.0).

Eighty-nine percent of simulator session participants also indicated they would use the simulator as part of a recurrent training program, with 75 percent indicating a frequency of twice per year and 25 percent indicating a quarterly frequency.

SEMINAR SESSIONS

Seven seminar topics were presented over the two-day event. The duration of the seminars ranged from 90 minutes to three hours and addressed the following topics:

1. Single Pilot IFR
2. Stick & Rudder Skills in a Glass Cockpit
3. Human Factors in Loss of Control
4. iPad Best Practices – Flight Planning with Foreflight
5. Tailwheel Tips & Tricks
6. Angle of Attack Awareness
7. GPS: Beyond the Basics

Individual rankings for the seminars are presented in the following table:

Seminar #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Score	4.9	4.4	4.6	3.9	4.8	4.2	4.3

Seminar Rankings on a Scale of 1 to 5

Three of the topics scored *Excellent*, while the remaining topics all scored *Above Average*, with three of those strongly so. Taken as a whole, the seminar component scored 4.4 out of 5.0, the high end of *Above Average*. Participants also offered the following suggestions for seminar topics:

- Night Flight
- WingX on iPad
- Separate VFR and IFR Tracks
- ADM and Risk Management
- CFI/CFII Best Practices & Continuing Education
- Weather
- More on GPS
- Glass Panel Tips & Tricks
- Engine & Systems Management
- Intelligence Gathering and Planning Around IMC Weather while Flying IFR
- “Adventure Flying” such as Mountain Flying

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide three additional types of feedback: best part of the event, worst part of the event, and other comments. A summary of the recurring themes follows:

- Best Parts
 - The seminars, especially the selection of topics and the quality of the presentations
 - Meeting and interacting with other pilots who are similarly dedicated to learning, and how those interactions were enhanced by the smaller class sizes

- Worst Parts
 - Food and menu selection
 - Some overlap between topics
 - The preferred instrument panel failed and was not available for one of the simulator sessions

- Other Comments
 - A well organized and much needed event
 - Excellent program, looking forward to attending another one
 - Make the seminar slides available in one form or another to participants after the event

VALUE PROPOSITION

Participants were presented with a range of options during registration. Pricing with a simulator session was \$250 for both days, \$175 for one day. Without a simulator session, the price was \$175 for both days, \$100 for one day. A 10 percent discount was offered as a pre-registration incentive as well. As the event dates approached, an à la carte menu was added that offered individual seminars for \$35 each.

Respondents ranked as *Excellent* (4.8 out of 5.0) the value they received from attending the event compared to the cost. This is consistent with the overall scores given to the simulator and seminar components (4.5 and 4.4, respectively) and the fact that the majority would be willing to travel considerably farther than they did to attend similar events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered (in no particular order) to expand and further improve Regional Pilot Proficiency Projects:

General

1. The average age of participants was 58 years old:
 - a. Explore ways to attract younger pilots to these events.
2. Participants included just one female:
 - a. Explore ways to attract more women pilots to these events.
3. Seventy percent of the participants were flight and/or ground instructors:
 - a. Consider the possibility of tailoring Regional PPP events specifically to instructors
 - b. Leverage the fact that many event participants may be instructors; these participants can reach many more pilots in training (train-the-trainers to create a downstream multiplier effect).
 - c. Offer any of the SAFE-created Flight Instructor Open Forums as one (or more) of the seminar topics.
4. When possible, capitalize on vetted SAFE members at the local level to serve as seminar presenters and simulator instructors to reduce event overhead.
5. Events can be successful with seminars alone; lack of access to simulators should not disqualify potential event sites from consideration.
6. Develop guidelines for event sites and put out a call for proposals to host Regional events.

Master of Ceremonies

1. At the start of each day, include a review of the following:
 - a. Schedule
 - b. Location of Building Exits and Restrooms
 - c. Food Logistics (when and where)
2. At the end of each day, provide a short recap/wrap up.

Venue

1. Seminar class sizes should not exceed 50 participants.
2. Explore facilities where breakout sessions or parallel tracks can be conducted simultaneously.
3. Although events that couple seminars with the opportunity for simulator training sessions would be ideal, events can be successful with seminars alone.
4. Regarding Simulator Training Sessions:
 - a. Conduct at least one seminar or group discussion each day about the simulators and the scenarios being used.
 - b. Given that participants are paying for simulator training, conduct the sessions like traditional instruction with more detailed pre- and post-simulator briefings.

Marketing/Promotion

1. Engage in stronger marketing campaigns announcing upcoming events:
 - a. Initial marketing efforts should be geared toward the national aviation media;
 - b. Subsequent marketing efforts should be concentrated within several hundred miles of the event location;
 - c. A local event coordinator(s) should be identified and tasked with driving promotional efforts, and coordinating with the event host, and should provide frequent updates to SAFE's Executive Director.
 - d. When setting up the FAA SPANS notice, be sure the FAA is not listed as the sponsor of the event.
2. Marketing and promotion efforts should begin at least 90 days prior to the event.
3. Improve the branding of PPP through the use of PowerPoint templates for seminar presenters, briefing note cards for simulator instructors, and possibly event apparel for presenters, instructors, and staff.

Sponsorship

1. Seek sponsorship to expand PPP activities, including covering all travel costs and full compensation for services provided by presenters, simulator instructors, and other PPP staff.
2. Fund pre- and post-project activities, including:
 - a. Providing all seminar slides to participants on thumb drives;
 - b. Providing a video recording of each participant's simulator session on DVD.
3. Fund the development of additional forum topics and simulator scenarios, the mentoring of presenters and instructors, the creation of a bureau of qualified project speakers and instructors, and so on.

* * *

PILOT PROFICIENCY PROJECT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Forum Presenters:

Eric Hake, Tony Johnstone, Doug Stewart, Rich Stowell

Simulator Instructors:

Mark Adams, Bill Ervin, Robert Lussow

Redbird Team:

Charlie Gregoire, Jerry Gregoire, Josh Harnegal, Roger Sharp, Todd Willinger

Skyport FBO:

Renee and The Rest of The Wonderful Staff at Skyport