

GAO REPORT LOOKS AT CARGO SAFETY

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What's at Issue

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has published a report analyzing safety, and how it can be improved, in air cargo operations.

Why It's Important

The primary recommendation of the GAO report, "*Aviation Safety: Better Data and Targeted FAA Efforts Needed to Identify and Address Safety Issues of Small Air Cargo Carriers*," is for the FAA to collect better data on the air cargo industry so that a more thorough analysis of safety can occur.

Major Provisions

In conducting its analysis, the GAO interviewed several industry experts and compiled a detailed safety survey.

The study reports that:

- Over a ten-year period, the significant majority of air cargo accidents involved small air cargo carriers, such as those operated under Part 135. Of the 443 accidents identified, 79 percent of all accidents and 96 percent of fatal accidents were in smaller aircraft.
- Pilot performance was cited as a major contributor in 80 percent of fatal air cargo accidents.
- More federal efforts to improve safety target the larger airlines rather than smaller carriers.
- Voluntary disclosure programs are seen as a significant tool for enhancing safety, but they are not widely used by smaller carriers.
- Many experts who participated in the study believe that better technologies in the aircraft would have a positive safety impact.
- Use of risk assessment tools was seen as very useful for helping pilots assess their safety risks prior to flight; however, they also are not being widely used by smaller carriers.

NATA Position

NATA agrees that increasing the available data on air cargo and Part 135 operations as a whole is the only way to conduct meaningful evaluations of safety and the impact of safety interventions. However, the association remains concerned that an FAA data collection effort could go far beyond the minimum necessary for evaluation and become too burdensome for operators.

Status

The GAO report is available for download at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09614.pdf>.

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