
TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
COMMUNICATION.....	I
AVIATION SAFETY PROGRAM.....	II
CERTIFICATION.....	II
COMPLIANCE.....	II
INTRODUCTION	1
USABLE PILOT AND AMT SURVEY RESPONSES	3
AVIATION PROFILE	5
AVIATION INFORMATION.....	5
COMPLIANCE.....	9
COMMUNICATIONS	11
CONTACT WITH FLIGHT STANDARDS	11
COURTESY OF FLIGHT STANDARDS PERSONNEL.....	15
TIMELINESS.....	16
CONSISTENCY OF INFORMATION.....	18
ACCESS TO INFORMATION.....	20
TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION.....	20
AVIATION SAFETY PROGRAM	23
AVIATION SAFETY SEMINAR ATTENDANCE.....	23
QUALITY OF SAFETY SEMINARS.....	24
AVIATION SAFETY COUNSELOR PROGRAM.....	24
FAA/NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STOCK CAR AUTO RACERS (NASCAR) AMT AWARDS PROGRAM.....	25
TRAINING HOURS REQUIRED FOR RECOGNITION AWARDS.....	25
CERTIFICATION	27
INSPECTION AUTHORIZATIONS (IA).....	27
COMPLIANCE	29
SANCTIONS.....	29
COURTESY OF FLIGHT STANDARDS PERSONNEL.....	30
FLIGHT STANDARDS ACTIONS	31
COMMUNICATION.....	31
AVIATION SAFETY PROGRAM.....	33
CERTIFICATION.....	34
COMPLIANCE.....	35
CONCLUSION	37
APPENDIX 1	39
APPENDIX 2	43
APPENDIX 3	55

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Flight Standards Service conducts the Customer Satisfaction Survey to gather “firsthand” information from airmen regarding their satisfaction with the customer service we provide as an organization. In 1998 we conducted a survey with 102,000 pilots and 136,000 Aviation Maintenance Technicians (AMT). This summary report addresses the national findings based on the legible responses received from 24,701 AMTs. The results of the National Pilot Customer Satisfaction Survey were published and are available at <http://www.faa.gov/avr/afs/npcssr/index.htm>. Though progress has been made since the previous Customer Satisfaction Survey conducted in 1993, Flight Standards must continue to strive for improvements in the two major areas of communication and standardization (consistency of information) at all levels: headquarters, region, and field.

The AMT survey respondents reported themselves as holding certificates for Airframe and Powerplant (63 percent), Airframe (13 percent), Powerplant (12 percent), Inspection Authorization (11 percent), Repairman (1 percent), and Designated Examiner (1 percent). Forty-six percent of the respondents indicated that they worked on general aviation aircraft and 54 percent on air carrier aircraft. Only 9 percent of the AMTs indicated that they worked on rotary aircraft. The majority of respondents (64 percent) had held their certificates for over 4 but less than 20 years. Twenty-seven percent held their most advanced rating for over 20 years. Seventy percent of our respondents responded that over 50 percent of their workweeks involved “hands-on” aviation maintenance or the direct supervision of maintenance tasks.

Flight Standards has a continuing interest in the lasting impression that we make on aviation professionals. We assumed that the AMT respondents who had contact with us within the year prior to the survey would provide information most relevant to our current organization. Therefore, we focused on the responses of this group as indicators of the service we currently provide.

COMMUNICATION

The most prevalent means used by AMTs to communicate with Flight Standards were walk-in visits, telephone calls, and interaction in the field. Eighty-four percent indicated that Flight Standards personnel treated them with courtesy. Sixty-nine percent thought that the service provided was timely while only 9 percent thought the opposite. This latter group was comprised of only 4 percent who reported that a delay in service interfered with their commerce or ability to earn a living.

Since the previous 1993 survey, we have taken corrective actions to address a lack of standardization when providing information to our customers. However, as indicated by this current survey, we must continue to address this topic. Of the 27 percent of the AMTs who had contact with more than one Flight Standards District Office (FSDO), 9 percent reported that they found inconsistency in the information provided. When we analyzed the same information provided by AMTs who had contact with more than one inspector either within the same or different FSDOs, 56 percent reported either neutral or negative answers.

Sixty-seven percent had access to e-mail or the Internet, but only 38 percent were aware that technical information was available on the Flight Standards web page. We assume that this figure has increased with the passage of time and the increased use of the Internet.

AVIATION SAFETY PROGRAM

The Aviation Safety Program includes 160 Safety Program Managers located throughout the nation who produce safety-related materials and conduct safety seminars or clinics for airmen. Only 30 percent of the respondents attended at least one safety seminar with only 10 percent having attended two or more seminars. Sixty-seven percent believed that the seminars made safer AMTs and over half reported that they would attend safety seminars during the next year. Only 17 percent of the AMTs knew that they could be appointed to assist Flight Standards in presenting safety seminars to broaden and refresh technical knowledge. Approximately 5,000 respondents reported that they had received AMT awards under the FAA/National Association of Stock Car Auto Racers in conjunction with the Aviation Safety Program.

CERTIFICATION

Only 3 percent of the AMTs reported that they had temporary certificates or additional ratings added to their certificates during the previous year. Of this small subset, 90 percent reported that results reflected their skills and knowledge accurately; 88 percent believed the examiner acted courteously; 85 percent reported that the examiners explained the results clearly; and 83 percent agreed that the examiner represented the FAA favorably. Eleven percent of the AMTs held an Inspection Authorization of which 93 percent renewed their certificates during the previous year. The most popular methods to renew their certificates were work activities and FAA approved training such as an Aviation Safety Program Seminar.

COMPLIANCE

Only 4 percent reported that they had received Letters of Investigation in the past 3 years. Sixty-five percent were neutral or negative on the appropriateness of the sanctions for violations. In addition, 51 percent of the AMTs agreed and 33 were neutral when asked if Flight Standards personnel were courteous when giving violations.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the Customer Satisfaction Survey are assisting Flight Standards to prioritize areas of change based on information provided directly from our customers. As an organization we must continue to develop interventions to affect improvement and sustain programs and services that meet the needs and expectations of our customers. Survey findings are being compiled specific to our regional and field offices to help them each to define particular areas of customer service in which they must improve. Our commitment to developing interventions and solutions will be documented in performance plans developed annually at the national, regional, and district office levels.

INTRODUCTION

In response to an Executive Order directing Federal agencies to solicit input from their customers to determine their degree of satisfaction with the services provided to them by the United States Government, the Flight Standards Service, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), conducted its first comprehensive Customer Satisfaction Survey in 1993. The first section of this two-part survey focused on feedback from individual pilots about the service provided by the Flight Standards District Offices (FSDO). The second section examined the relationship that employees of 14 different air carriers had with personnel in their respective Flight Standards Certificate Holding District Offices. The survey returns provided Flight Standards with important information and highlighted two major areas of concern among our customers: lack of standardization in both the level of service and the information provided by the field offices and difficulties in communication between Flight Standards employees and their customers.

“By March 8, 1994, each agency subject to this order shall report on its customer surveys to the President. As information about customer satisfaction becomes available, each agency shall use that information in judging the performance of agency management and in making resource allocations.”

Executive Order: Setting Customer Service Standards; September 11, 1993, Section 2

Based on the success of the 1993 survey, Flight Standards designed a more comprehensive Customer Satisfaction Survey to gather detailed “firsthand” information in focused areas from our customers. Recognizing the pivotal role that Aviation Maintenance Technicians (AMT¹) play in aviation safety, we determined that the survey also must include this segment of the aviation community. Thus, Flight Standards mailed the Customer Satisfaction Survey to 102,000 pilots and 136,000 AMTs in October 1998. Though questionnaires were distributed simultaneously to both pilots and AMTs, the results of the National Pilot Customer Satisfaction Survey were published in September 2000 and are available at <http://www.faa.gov/avr/afs/npcssr/index.htm>.

This report is a summary of the overall organizational results derived from the 1998 National AMT Customer Satisfaction Survey. The AMTs, as did the pilots, told us that progress had been made since the 1993 survey findings. Yet, as an organization, Flight Standards must continue to strive for improvements in the two major areas of communication and standardization (consistency of information provided) at all levels: headquarters, regional, and field offices. Based on the findings in this report, Flight Standards must now determine the appropriate interventions at the national level to address these organizational weaknesses. While the section entitled, *Flight Standards Actions*, details some organizational actions already in progress, additional initiatives must be identified for ongoing improvement. Individual regional and field office survey results will be provided to

¹ Aviation Maintenance Technician is the preferred term of reference for a mechanic working in the specific field of aviation. The Code of Federal Regulations, Part 65.81, uses the term mechanic. Throughout this report, we will use the preferred term.

management officials for analysis and identification of specific areas for improvement unique to their organizational units. Follow-up surveys will be designed to help measure success at all organizational levels.

The AMT survey included 46 questions under the 6 focus areas of *Aviation Information, Communications, Aviation Safety Program, Certification, Access to Information, and Compliance*. Appendix I contains the actual survey instrument (questionnaire) used to solicit information. Appendix II contains the tables of the statistical results derived from detailed analyses of the information provided to us by the AMTs. These tables are the basis for all the information, as well as the charts and graphs presented in this report.

The survey *was not* addressed to all certificated AMTs. A random sample was chosen and stratified for size of population serviced by each field office that duplicated the process used to survey the pilots. However, proportionately, we sent surveys to a greater number of AMTs than pilots. This was due to the fact that pilots update their information, including a current address with the FAA on a periodic basis as they receive Flight Reviews and/or renew their medical certifications. Although AMTs have corresponding requirements to keep current addresses in official records, they do not have requirements for reviews or medical certificates. Since the reviews and medical certifications provide the occasions to update the records, Flight Standards assumed that many addresses contained in the AMT database were not current. Attempting to ensure the greatest rate of postal delivery, we ran the addresses in the database against a software program from the United States Postal Service; thereby, eliminating addresses that did not exist on carrier routes. We then matched addresses with appropriate zip codes and, lastly, we conducted a beta test of the remaining addresses to establish a probable rate of return. Based on all this information, we ultimately over-sampled the total population of AMTs to help ensure that we would receive enough responses to support statistically valid analyses.

The survey was mailed to 136,000 certificate-holding AMTs. We assumed that 102,077 AMTs actually received the questionnaires, since the United States Postal Service returned 39,923 survey instruments to Flight Standards because of inaccurate or expired forwarding addresses. Flight Standards received 26,841 completed surveys equating to a 26-percent return rate. This translated statistically into a **99-percent confidence level**, meaning that we were 99 percent sure that our results would be the same (plus or minus 1 percent) if we were to repeat the survey.

Comparing the surveys of both the pilots and AMTs, we sampled 16 percent of the certificated pilots and 40 percent of the certificated AMTs with respective deliverable rates of 94 percent and 75 percent (Table 1)². From these delivered surveys, we derived a 26-percent rate of return for the AMTs in contrast to a 35-percent rate for the pilots. As we found with the pilot survey group, some of the returns submitted by the AMTs could not be used because they were damaged, illegible, or not completed correctly. However, of those

² There are 336,670 AMTs in the Civil Aviation Registry. The database used for the survey contained a total of 258,915 names. The database excluded AMTs with foreign addresses, addresses known to be inaccurate, and addresses of AMTs who requested that their information not be distributed. Flight Standards calculated the number for the statistical sample from the total 336,670 names. For comparisons that required us to use all AMTs in the database, we used the number of 258,915.

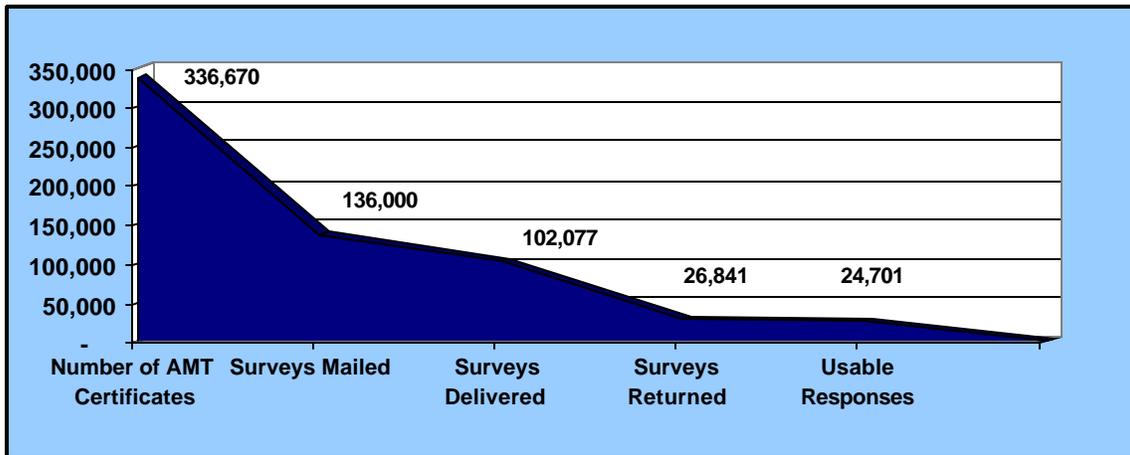
returned surveys, 90 percent of those submitted by the AMTs were usable for analysis differing slightly from the 96 percent of usable pilot responses. Focusing on just the AMTs, Figure 1 shows the progression from the entire available population of certificated AMTs to the surveys used for analysis.

TABLE 1

Overall Statistics	Pilots	% Pilots	AMTs	% of AMTs	Total	% of Total
Total Number	618,298	100%	336,670	100%	954,968	100%
Surveys Mailed	102,000	16%	136,000	40%	238,000	25%
Surveys Delivered	95,400	94%	102,077	75%	197,477	83%
Surveys Returned to Flight Standards	33,861	35%	26,841	26%	60,702	31%
Usable Responses	32,338	96%	24,701	90%	56,447	93%

Usable Pilot and AMT Survey Responses

FIGURE 1

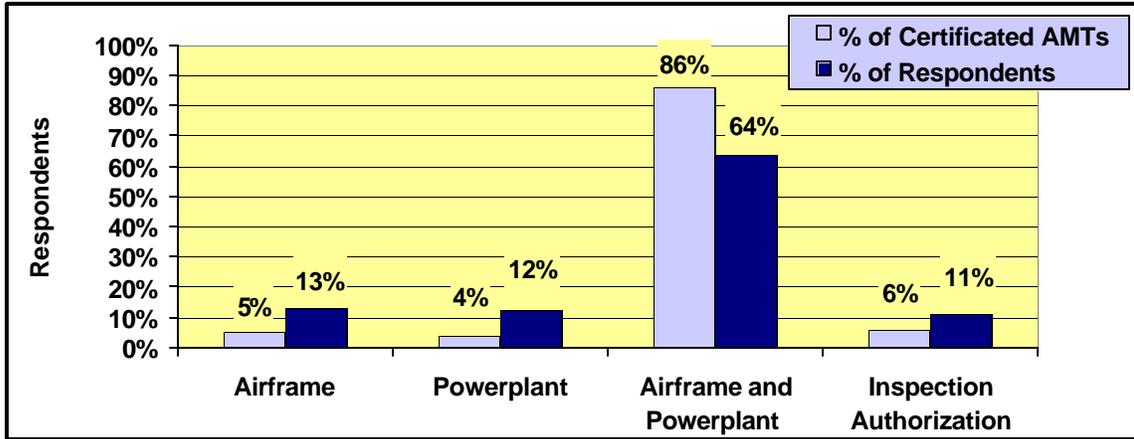


Progression from Total AMT Population to Usable Survey Responses

It was important to establish that the AMT respondents reflected the whole population of certificate-holding AMTs. Closely examining the data, we discovered that the percentages of the various certificates held by the AMT respondents correlated with those of the total population with a correlation coefficient of 0.999. Therefore, we assumed that survey

returns were highly representative of the total population of AMTs contained in the Flight Standards databases (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2



Representation by AMT Certificate and Rating

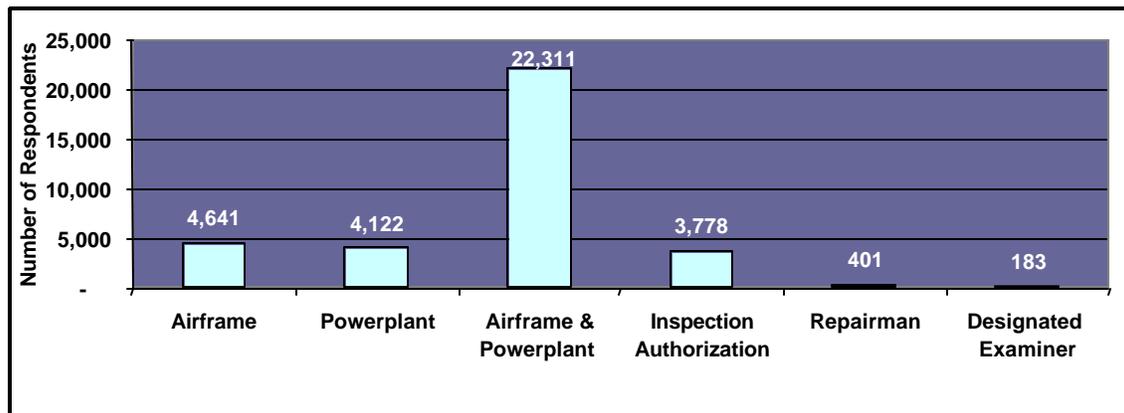
AVIATION PROFILE

As with the National Pilot Customer Satisfaction Survey, we combined the data collected under the focus areas of *Aviation Information* and *Compliance* to determine the aviation profile of our respondents. We requested that the respondents provide aviation information about themselves that included the types of certificates and/or ratings they held, the type of aircraft they maintained, and the amount of time they had held their highest certificates. In addition, we asked what percentage of their workweek was spent in direct hands-on aviation maintenance activities or supervision thereof. We also asked if they had received a Letter of Investigation within the last 3 years.

AVIATION INFORMATION

AMTs were asked to report the certificates and ratings they held by checking all choices, i.e., Airframe, Powerplant, Airframe and Powerplant (A&P), Inspection Authorization, Repairman, or Designated Examiner, that applied to them (Figure 3). The respondents reported themselves as holding A&P certificates (64 percent), followed by Airframe certificates (13 percent), and Powerplant certificates (12 percent). Other certificates and ratings included Inspection Authorization (11 percent).

FIGURE 3



Certificates and Ratings Held

Aircraft often are divided into two categories: under 12,500 pounds and 12,500 pounds or more. These are referred to respectively as “small” and “large” aircraft. Generally, small aircraft are used in general aviation, while heavier, large aircraft are involved in cargo and passenger air carrier service. However, there are exceptions to this rule. Some small aircraft are used to carry passengers under Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) 135 air carrier operations, while some large aircraft support commuter and business jet general aviation operations³. The majority of respondents, 63 percent, reported working on large planes and 37 percent on small planes (Figure 4).

³ Examples of this are the Gulfstream IV and the Learjet aircraft. Both are business jets that are classified as large but used in general aviation and regulated under FAR Part 91. In contrast, the Piper Navajo, which can be used to carry passengers under FAR Part 135, is a small aircraft.

Aircraft on Which the Respondents Worked

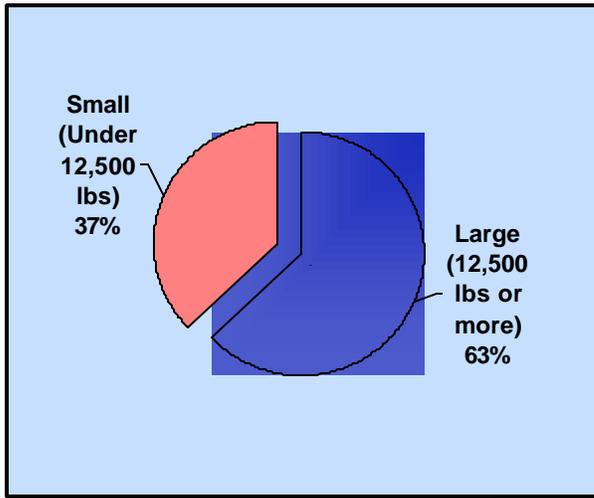


FIGURE 4

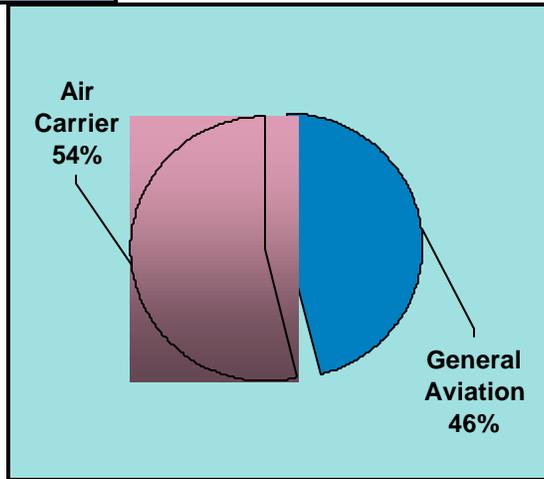
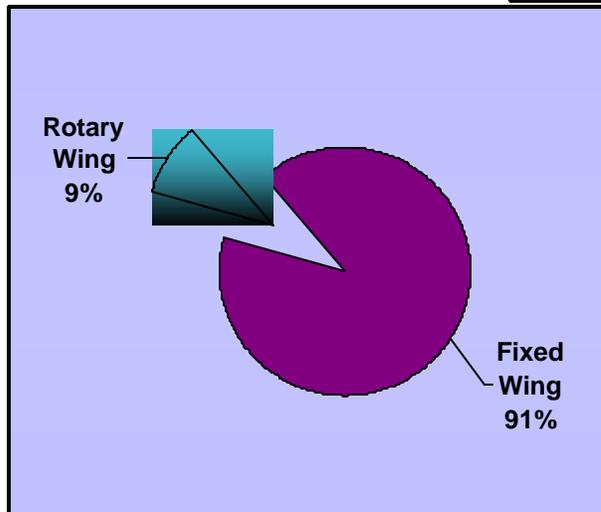


FIGURE 6

FIGURE 5



Forty-six percent of the AMT respondents indicated that they worked on general aviation aircraft and 54 percent on air carrier aircraft (Figure 5). Pilots who responded were similarly divided: 50 percent were students, recreational, or private pilots and 50 percent had commercial or airline transport certificates. Only 9 percent of the respondents reported that they worked on rotary wing aircraft. In contrast, 91 percent of AMTs reported that they worked on fixed wing aircraft (Figure 6). It is typical for an AMT to specialize in either rotary aircraft or fixed wing aircraft.

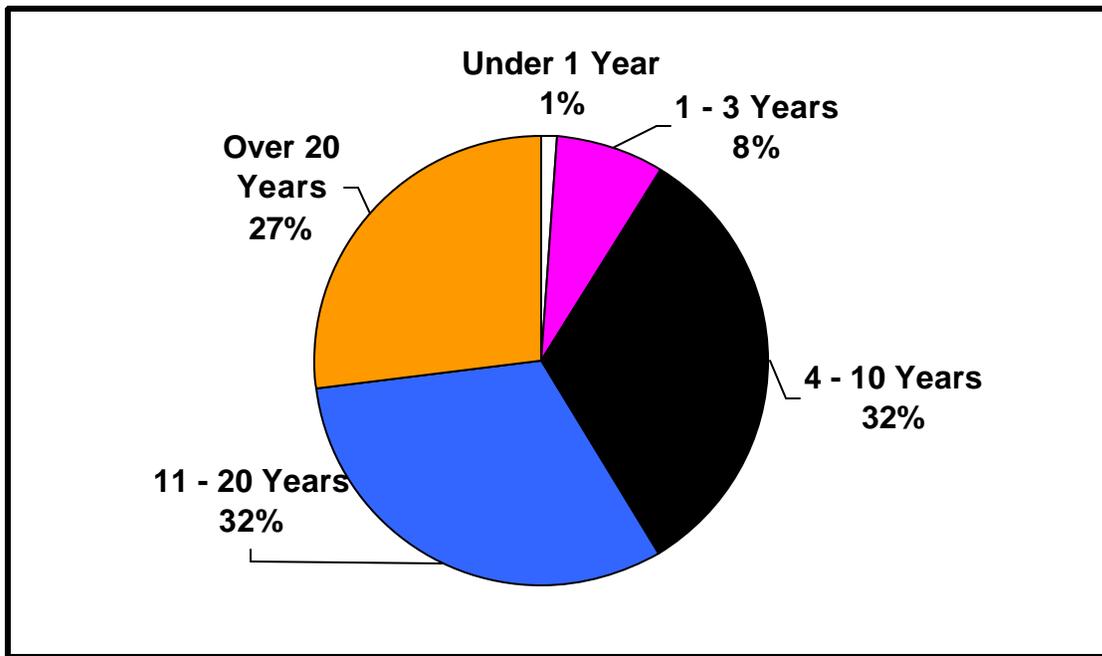
The majority of respondents, 64 percent, reported they held their certificates and ratings for over 4 but less than 20 years. These two groups were broken evenly between 11 to 20 years and 4 to 10 years at 32 percent each (Figure 7). Twenty-seven percent held their most advanced ratings for over 20 years. The least populous groups were those of the AMTs who had held their certificates for less than 1 year or between 1 and 3 years. Together these two latter groups comprised only 9 percent of the survey respondents. We interpreted this small showing as representative of the decline in the upcoming generation of AMTs. According to the Department of Labor (DOL), there are currently 137,000 AMTs employed by the aviation industry. DOL projects, given the rate of growth of the industry, the need for 155,000 AMTs by the year 2006. This equates to an increase of 13 percent. When growth of the industry and attrition due to retirement or career change are taken into account, DOL estimates that up to 50,000 new students must enroll between now and 2006 in aviation maintenance schools to supply the industry's needs.

The number of recent graduates from these schools gives perspective to these figures. DOL statistics for 1998 suggest that even though 4,510 students graduated with new A&P licenses, only 3,338 chose to work in the aviation industry. An AMT, who holds a certificate as a mechanic with an A&P rating, can apply those skills to other industries where pay rates are higher and work conditions more pleasing (e.g. milder climates and better hours). These industries include power companies, electronics firms, the railroad and automotive industries, and amusement parks⁴. The competition for experienced AMTs has changed the job market. The aviation industry must focus on how it will meet the increased demand for AMTs. The section of this report entitled *Flight Standards Actions* addresses the efforts that Flight Standards has made to help resolve this situation.

Seventy percent of our respondents reported that over 50 percent of their workweeks involved "hands-on" aviation maintenance or the direct supervision of maintenance tasks (Figure 8). We concluded that those who responded to the survey were AMTs who were currently working within the aviation industry, rather than those who had changed careers or retired. We also assumed that the remaining 30 percent of the AMTs were employed in jobs that did not require them to work strictly on maintenance tasks. Since their job functions entailed other duties, the percentage of time during the workweek spent only on "hands-on" maintenance was lowered. Alternatively, these respondents may not have been using their skills as a primary source of income or may have been working within aviation only on a part-time basis.

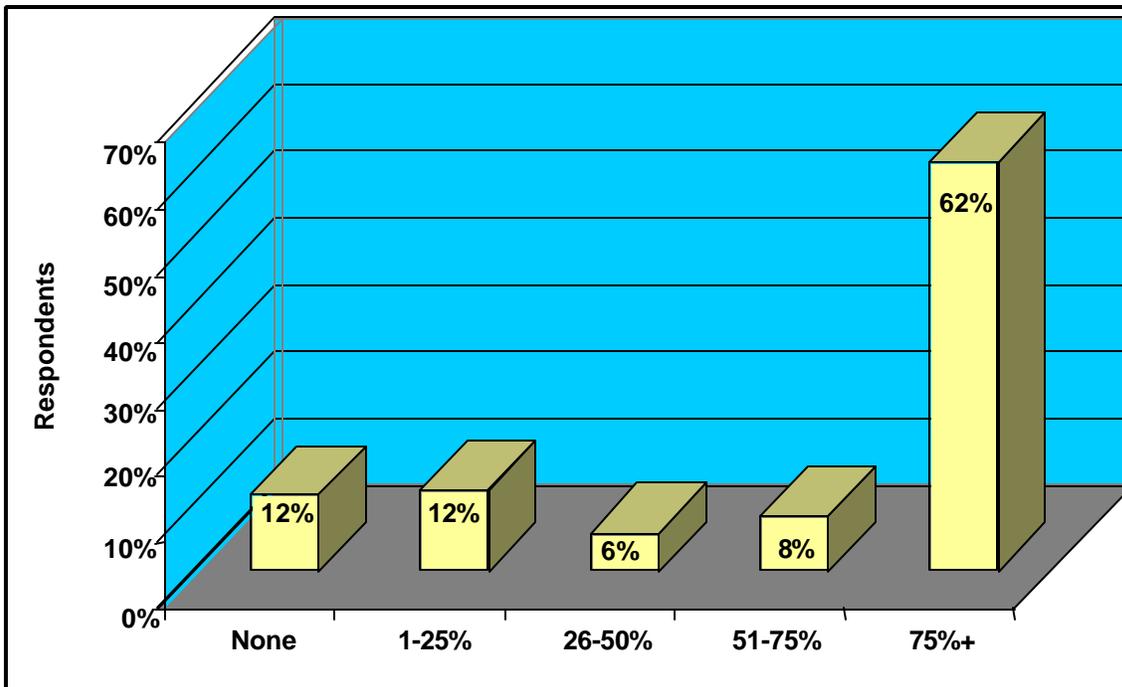
⁴ Adams, Marilyn, USA Today, "Airlines Grapple with Shortage of Mechanics," October 17, 2000, pg. 1B.

FIGURE 7



Number of Years AMTs Held Their Certificates and Ratings

FIGURE 8



Percentage of Work Week Dedicated to Aviation Maintenance Activities

COMPLIANCE

To help further understand the profile of the AMT respondents, Flight Standards examined questions from the focus area of *Compliance*. To ensure that a small number of “disgruntled” AMTs did not unfairly sway the overall results of the survey, Flight Standards asked the respondents to provide information about any violations that they may have received during the past 3 years. If AMTs who had received Letters of Investigation and been investigated for violations responded to the survey in numbers disproportionate to the actual number in the total population, then the results could have weighed negatively against Flight Standards. Like the pilots, the response rate of the AMTs to this section of questions was low and not significant enough to affect the outcome of the survey. Only 4 percent of the AMTs responded to questions related to their Letters of Investigation.

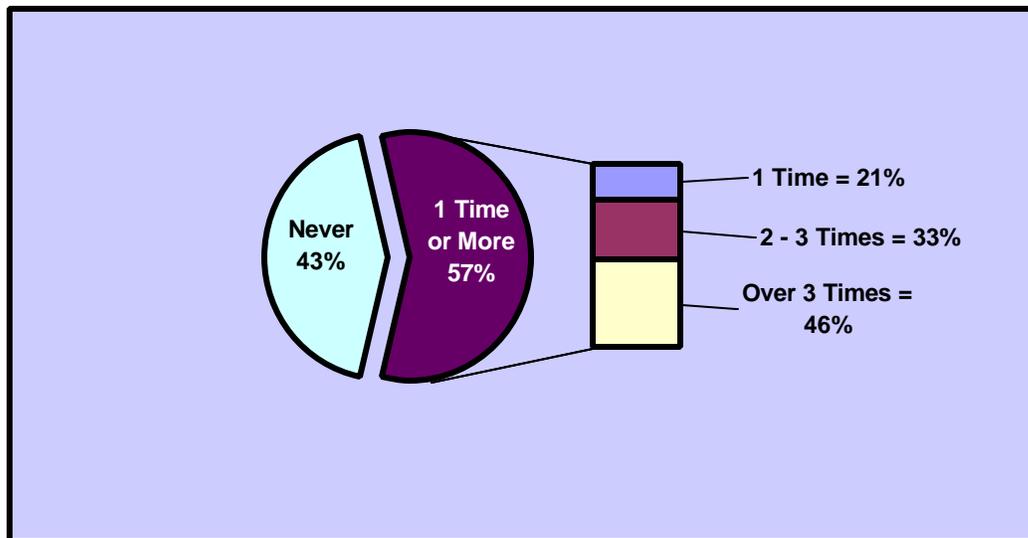
COMMUNICATIONS

When Flight Standards developed the Customer Satisfaction Survey instrument for AMTs, we separated *Communication* and *Access to Information* into two focus areas. However, as with the pilots, we combined them for reporting purposes based on their close relationship. Linking the two areas allowed Flight Standards to evaluate them more accurately from the customer's point of view, since the majority of our customers communicate or interact with Flight Standards employees as they seek information.

CONTACT WITH FLIGHT STANDARDS

Applying the process used for the pilot survey, we conducted the summary analysis of information gathered under the two focus areas mentioned above by concentrating on survey respondents who had the most recent contact with Flight Standards personnel. Most of the respondents completed the survey instrument toward the end of 1998⁵. To extract the responses of those AMTs with contact during 1998, we applied several "filter" questions. The answers to these specific questions were used in and of themselves to analyze data further. Question 8 in the survey asked, "In the last year, [e.g., 1998], how often have you had any contact with an FAA inspector⁶ or your local office (FSDO)?" The answers to this question were used to filter out the surveys of those respondents who did not have contact with the FAA during 1998.

FIGURE 9



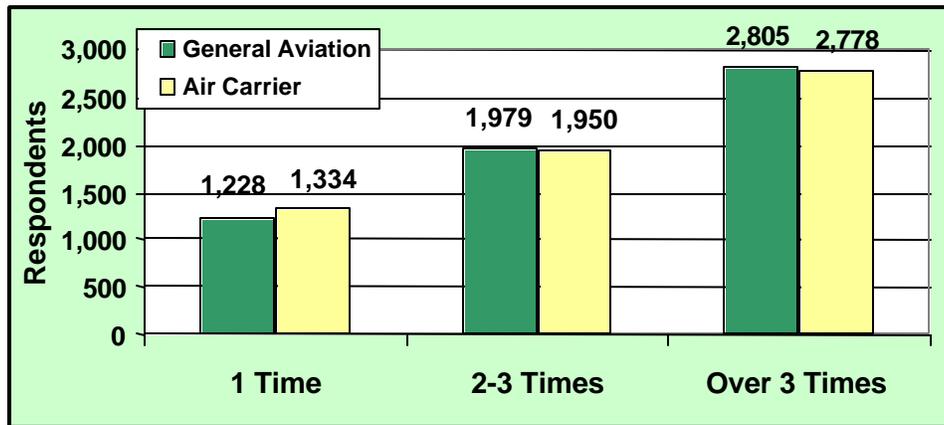
Amount of Contact with a FAA Inspector or Local FSDO

⁵ Flight Standards began receiving completed surveys in November 1998 and continued receiving them well into 1999.

⁶ The survey questions used the term "FAA Inspector." Flight Standards employs aviation safety inspectors who provide the types of services addressed in the survey. Therefore, in this report the term aviation safety inspector is used.

Upon examination of the 57 percent of the AMT respondents who had contact during 1998, we found that 21 percent of them had contact one time with an aviation safety inspector or the local FSDO; 33 percent had two or three occasions for contact; and 46 percent had contact more than three times (Figure 9). Consequently, unless indicated otherwise, throughout the remainder of this report we have focused on the responses provided by those with contact during 1998, as indicators of the customer service we currently provide.

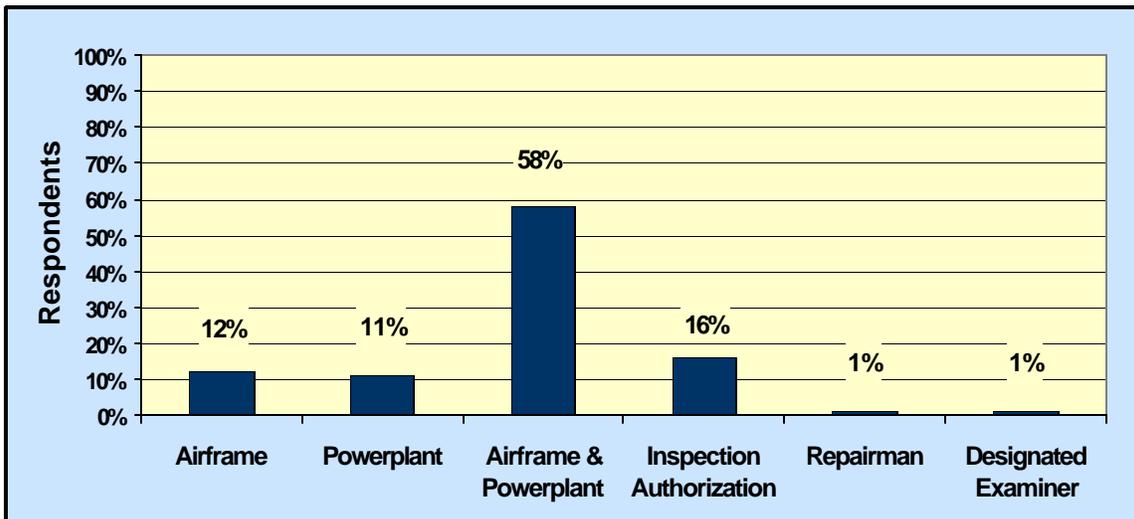
FIGURE 10



Contact by Air Carrier and General Aviation AMTs

Further analysis revealed that those AMTs working on general aviation aircraft were relatively equal to those working on air carrier aircraft, with each group representing 50 percent of the whole contact population. Within these two groups, we compared the average number of times contact was made with Flight Standards (Figure 10). An almost identical pattern existed between the AMTs working in either the general aviation or the air carrier industry. An analysis was also performed by types of ratings (Figure 11). The majority or 58 percent of AMTs who had contacts with Flight Standards held a mechanics certificate with an A&P rating, 16 percent held an inspection authorization, 12 percent held just an airframe rating, and 11 percent held only a powerplant rating.

FIGURE 11

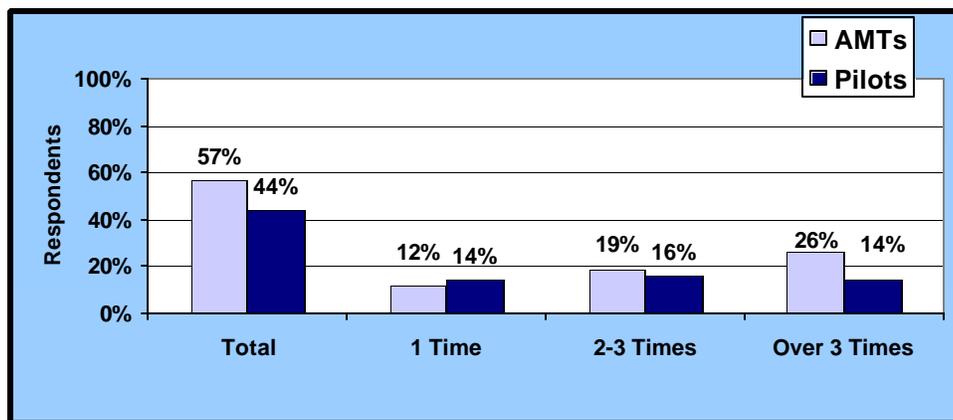


Contact by Certificate

Comparing AMT and pilot responses, we saw distinctions between the two groups of aviation professionals. Forty-four percent of the pilots had contact with a FSDO or an aviation safety inspector while 57 percent of the AMTs had contact (Figure 12). The total number for each group differed by only four people; however, this equated to a difference of 13 percent based on the total number of respondents for each group. Further analysis showed that 12 percent more AMTs had contact three or more times with Flight Standards than did pilots. Flight Standards concluded that the higher activity of the AMT versus the pilot community could be explained by the nature of the work that the AMTs perform. For example, an AMT with an inspection authorization working at a fixed base of operation is likely to visit the FSDO at least once a month to obtain Field Approvals for major aircraft repairs or alterations, policy interpretations, forms, issuance or re-issuance of aircraft documents such as Airworthiness Certificates, or changes of registration. These situations dictate the need for initial contact and communication that is often repeated before the aircraft is airworthy. In most situations, a pilot does not have the same need for recurrent communication.

Going back to just the AMTs, we focused on how contact with the Flight Standards was

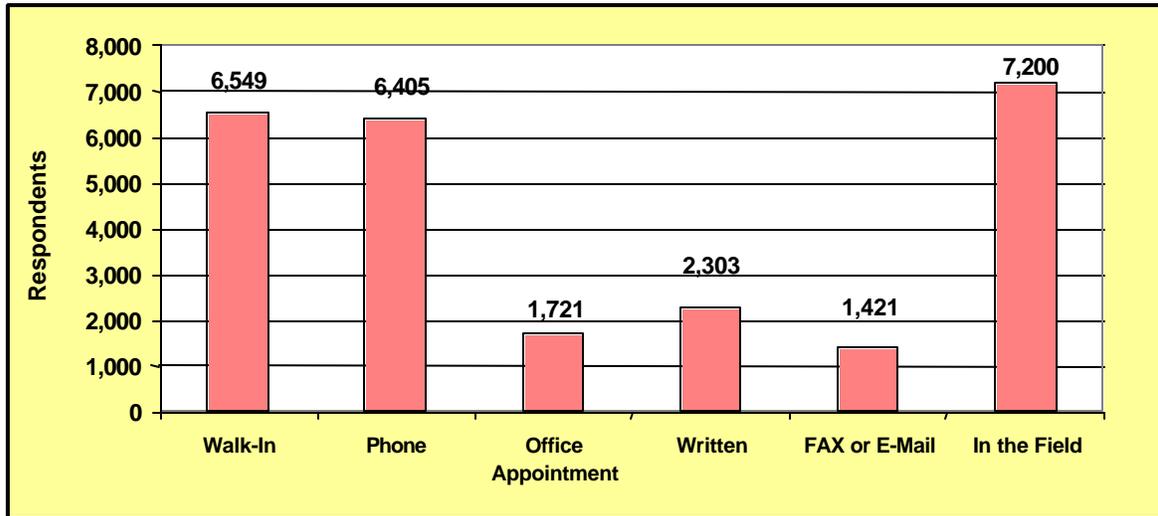
FIGURE 12



AMT and Pilot Contact with Flight Standards

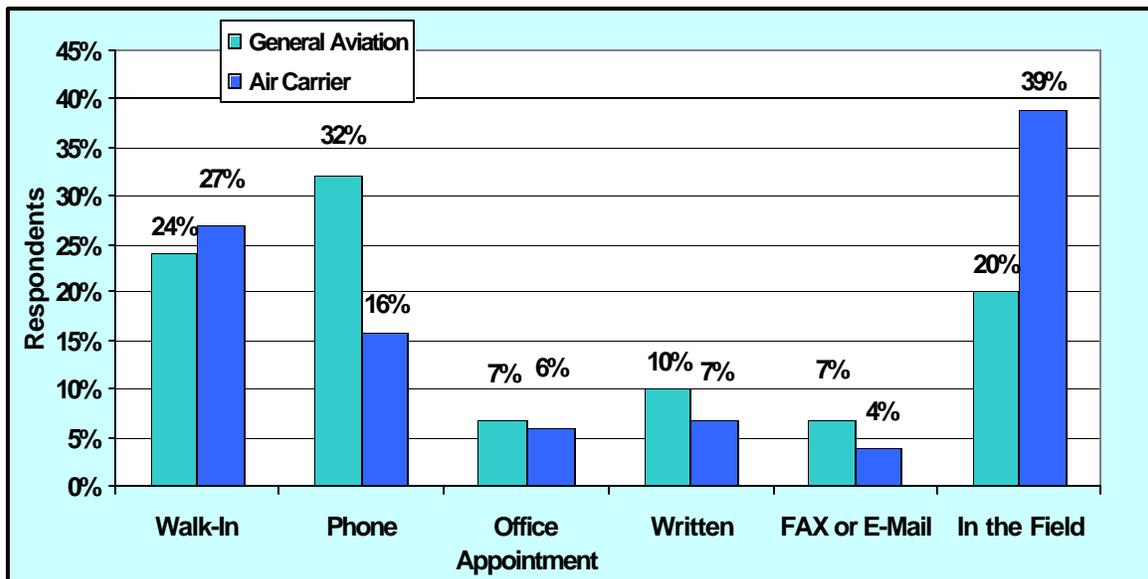
made. Respondents told us that most of the communication occurred during interaction in the field, walk-in visits, or telephone conversations. Since the AMTs were instructed to check all answers that applied (there could be more than one answer per respondent), Figure 13 provides a total number of responses for each method of communication rather than a percentage.

FIGURE 13



Methods of Communication with Flight Standards

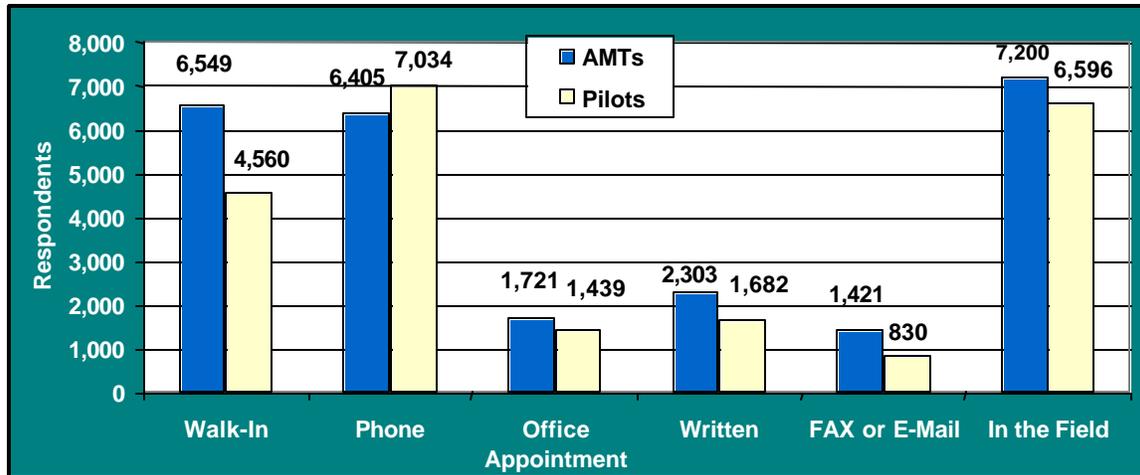
FIGURE 14



Methods of Contact by General Aviation and Air Carrier AMTs

When we examined contact by air carrier AMTs in contrast to that of general aviation AMTs, differences occurred (Figure 14). As previously mentioned, there was an equal number of general aviation and air carrier AMTs who had contact with Flight Standards. However, analysis showed that air carrier AMTs were 19 percent more likely to encounter Flight Standards personnel in the field, whereas, general aviation AMTs had a 16 percent higher rate of contact by telephone.

FIGURE 15



Pilot and AMT Contact with Flight Standards

When we compared the methods of contact between the pilots and AMTs, we discovered similar trends (Figure 15). Both groups indicated that their most prevalent means of communication were walk-in visits, telephone calls, and interaction in the field. This indicates that FSDO personnel must be prepared to solve problems and answer questions at a moment's notice throughout the workday during unplanned encounters with their customers.

COURTESY OF FLIGHT STANDARDS PERSONNEL

It is important that all Flight Standards personnel remember that they represent the entire FAA to each and every customer. It is never possible to be prepared for every question or request for information; however, it is always possible to be courteous. Both pilots (89 percent) and AMTs (84 percent) indicated that Flight Standards personnel treated them with courtesy. While these were relatively high ratings, we must not become complacent and fail to strive for improvement. Individual regional and field office analyses will identify if specific areas of weakness exist that must be targeted for improvement.

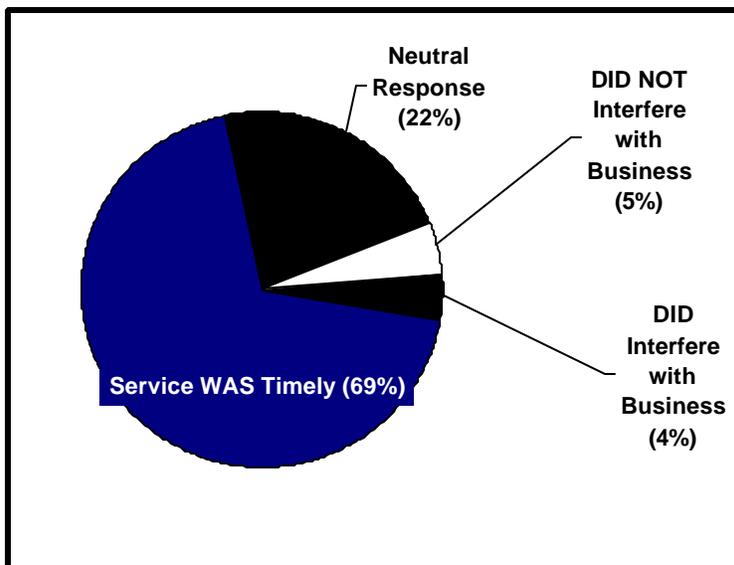
TIMELINESS

Flight Standards values providing service in a timely manner and understands the association between service and its effects on commerce or the livelihood of the requester. Therefore, we asked the following two questions:

Question 15: “How much would you agree that the service you received was timely?”

Question 16: “If the service was not timely, did the delay interfere with your commerce or ability to earn a living?”

FIGURE 16



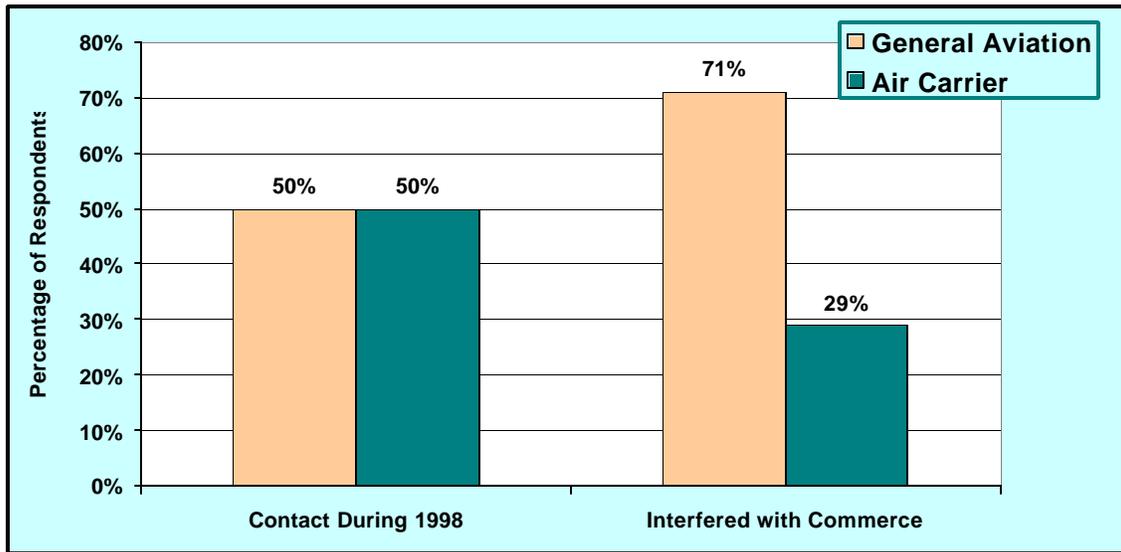
Timeliness of Service

effect that a lack of timeliness had on commerce by analyzing the responses of AMTs who worked in general aviation in contrast to those in air carrier aviation. Although the survey group was split evenly between the two groups, of the 4 percent who reported having commerce interrupted by lack of timeliness, 71 percent worked in the general aviation industry and 29 percent in the air carrier industry (Figure 17).

General aviation AMTs must provide their customers with a variety of services ranging from performing major repairs and alterations, certification of aircraft in another category, obtaining field approvals, or helping to obtain a one-time Supplemental Type Certificate. These services require the AMT to interact directly with the local FSDO and, specifically, a general aviation safety inspector. The inspector provides these services “on-demand,” and, though continual and challenging are not predictable. Therefore, unless an on-demand request is a safety of flight issue, it will be accomplished at the earliest convenience of an aviation safety inspector. This delay may have a direct effect on a General Aviation AMT’s commerce or ability to earn a living.

In comparison to the 76-percent positive rate reported by pilots, 69 percent of the AMTs respondent group reported that the service they received from Flight Standards was timely; 22 percent gave neutral responses; and only 9 percent thought that the service was not timely (Figure 16). This 9 percent was comprised of 4 percent who reported that a delay interfered with their commerce or ability to earn a living and 5 percent for whom the delay did not affect commerce. We attempted to derive information about the

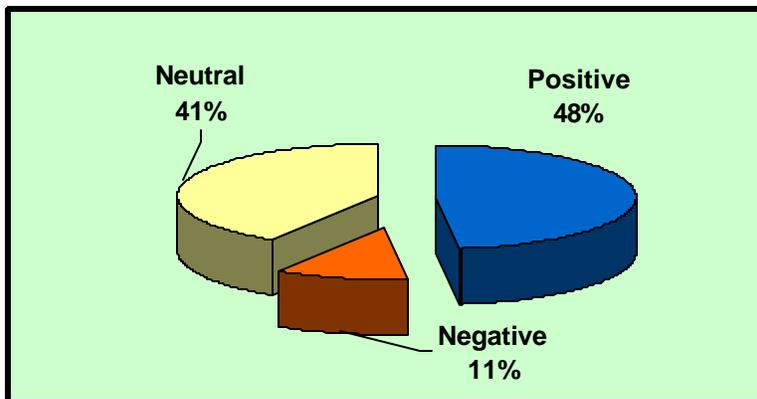
FIGURE 17



Lack of Timeliness Affected Commerce

In contrast, the lack of timeliness on the part of Flight Standards has minimal effect on the ability of an air carrier AMT to earn a living. The inspector’s annual work program includes “required” surveillance inspections that the FSDOs and, therefore inspectors, must administer to air carrier operators. The regulations require that certain inspections and services be accomplished on a periodic basis. Practically, this means that required items are given priority in each aviation safety inspector’s annual work program. Many times, an inspector must balance his or her annual work program with on-demand (or “walk-up”) surveillance or certification work. For the air carrier AMT, this process is invisible; an air carrier AMT would rarely initiate contact with the FAA. Interaction with the FAA is left to supervisors or management officials who address all regulatory issues with the aviation safety inspector. By contrast, a general aviation AMT, who is more dependant on the availability of on-demand service, is more affected by a lack of timeliness.

FIGURE 18



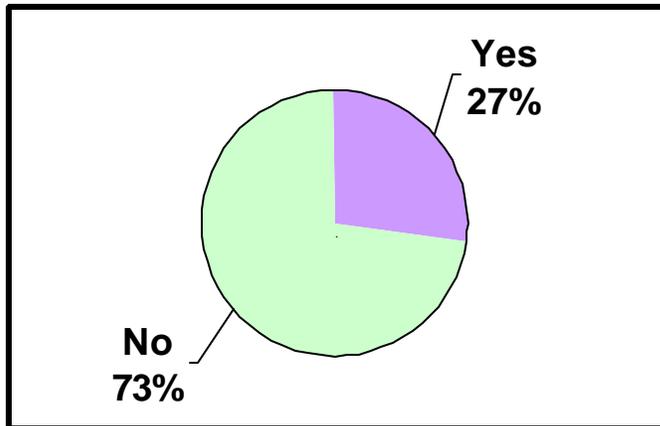
Timely Notice of Actions

When asked if Flight Standards provided timely notices of action, nearly half of the survey respondents reported positive answers, with only 11 percent reporting that notices of action were not timely (Figure 18). As in response to the 10 percent of the pilots who reported untimely notices of action, Flight Standards must explore methods to provide notices of action to AMTs in a more timely matter.

CONSISTENCY OF INFORMATION

Standardization among both aviation safety inspectors and FSDOs has been an ongoing concern of Flight Standards. The lack of standardization or the inconsistency of information provided by different FSDOs was highlighted in both the 1993 and 1998 Pilot Customer Satisfaction Surveys. To measure the level of standardization according to the AMT population, we first asked if they had contact with other FSDOs. We discovered that just over one quarter (27 percent) of the respondents had interaction with more than one FSDO (Figure

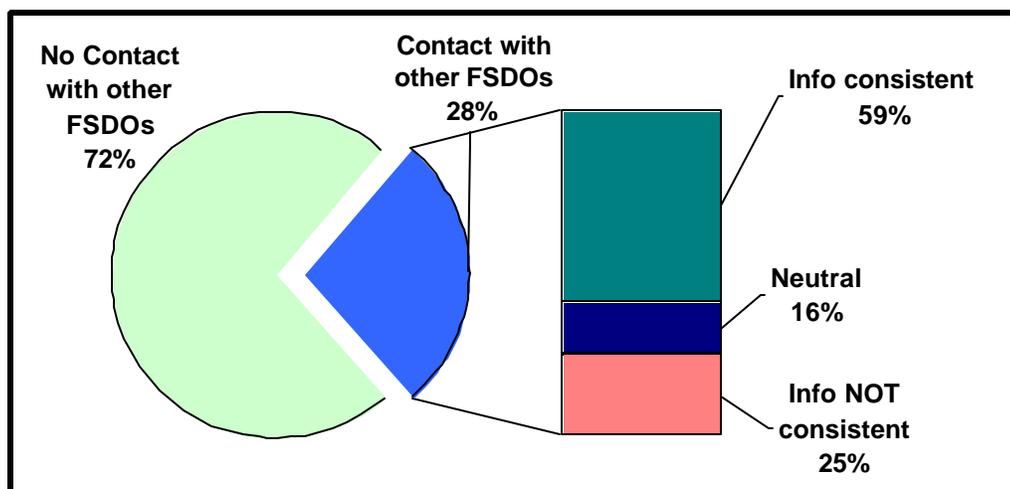
FIGURE 19



Contact with More than One FSDO

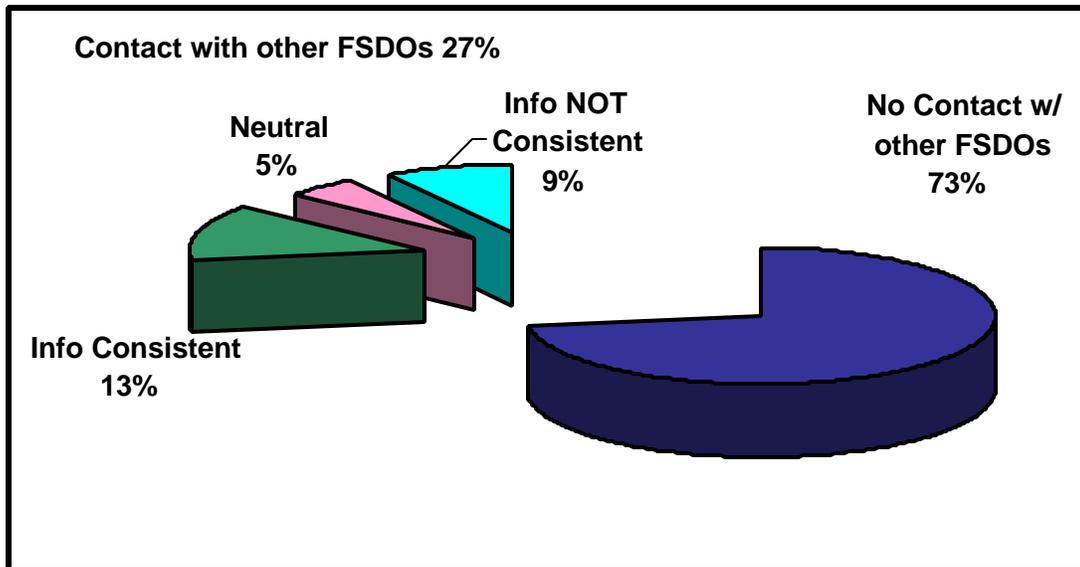
19). Then applying the same methodology used to measure consistency of information as recorded by the pilot respondents, Flight Standards found a general agreement. Of the 28 percent of pilots with multiple FSDO contacts, 25 percent reported inconsistencies in the information provided by different FSDOs (Figure 20). Of the 27 percent of AMTs with multiple FSDO contacts, 48 percent found inconsistencies in the information provided (Figure 21).

FIGURE 20



Consistency of Information Provided to Pilots

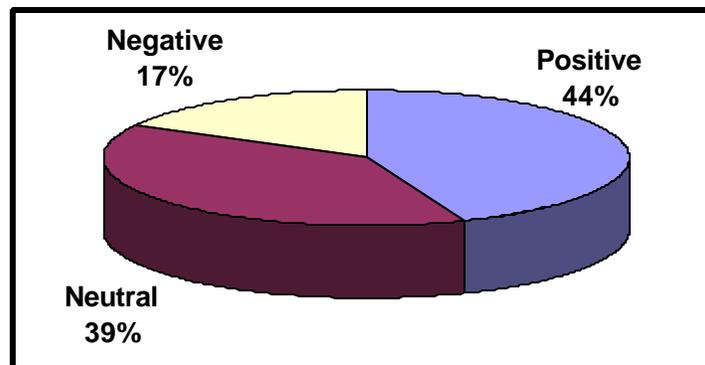
FIGURE 21



Consistency of Information Provided to AMTs

There are similarities between the responses recorded by both the pilots and AMTs as they pertain to the standardization of information provided by different aviation safety inspectors within either the same or different FSDOs. In response to the question “How much would you agree that information provided to you by different FAA inspectors is consistent?”, 44 percent of the AMT respondents reported an answer of “agree” or “strongly agree.” However, 39 percent were neutral with “neither agree nor disagree” answers while 17 percent reported inconsistency of information (Figure 22). This 17 percent of AMTs and the corresponding 18 percent of the pilots were large enough to cause concern. Flight Standards must remain focused on improving the consistency of information provided to customers by emphasizing actions currently implemented and developing new strategies to enhance standardization.

FIGURE 22

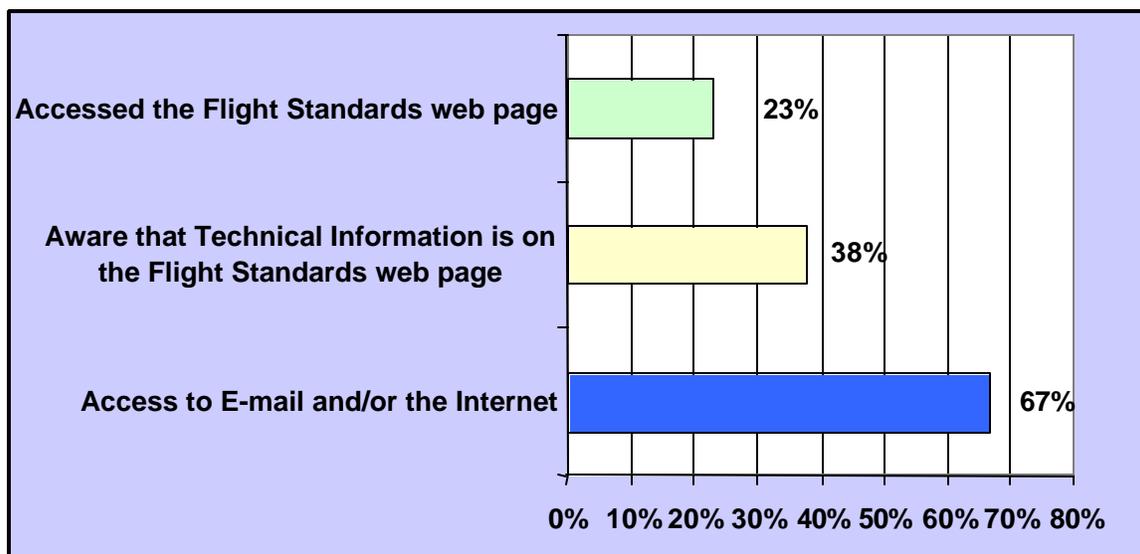


Consistency of Information Provided by Different Aviation Safety Inspectors

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

With increased access to the Internet, more information has become available to AMTs and the rest of the aviation community. To measure the effects of this technological innovation, we asked AMTs to respond to questions about their use of the Internet and e-mail to gather information necessary to perform maintenance tasks. Sixty-seven percent of all respondents had access to e-mail or the Internet, but only 38 percent were aware that technical information is available on the Flight Standards Web page. In fact, only 23 percent had actually accessed the Flight Standards Web page (Figure 23). However, as assumed with the passage of time, the use of the Internet by AMTs has increased. Future customer surveys will include questions to validate this assumption.

FIGURE 23



Use of Internet or E-mail Information

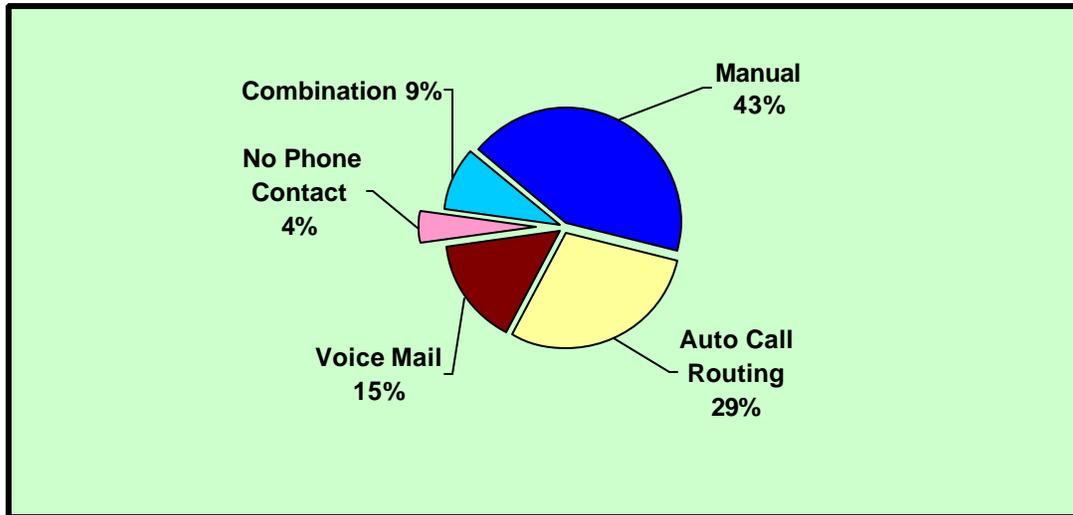
TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION

Flight Standards does not enforce a national standard for the telephone systems installed in regional and field offices. These offices have the latitude to determine the systems they select to provide telephone service. We found that the most prevalent type of telephone communication was a manual system, followed by automatic call routing and voice mail systems (Figure 24).

Table 2 indicates that 80 percent of the AMT respondents agreed that if they encountered voice mail or automatic routing, the instructions were clear. This was comparable to the 77 percent of the pilots who provided the same information. Sixty-one percent of the AMTs and 59 percent of the pilots told us that if they were calling for a specific person, they reached that person easily. Additionally, 60 percent and 64 percent respectively reported that if they were not calling for a specific person, they easily found someone who could give them the service

they needed. In contrast, 19 percent of each group of AMT and pilot respondents reported they were unable to reach a specific person easily and 14 percent reported that they were unable to find someone within the FSDO who could provide the requested service. As we reported in the national pilot report, analyses of regional and FSDO level data may identify specific locations that must take action to correct these deficiencies with improved telephone service.

FIGURE 24



Types of Phone Systems Encountered

TABLE 2

<i>Survey Questions: How much would you agree that:</i>	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Question #18: If the system was voice mail or automatic routing, the instructions were clear?			
% Pilots	77%	16%	7%
% AMTs	80%	12%	8%
Question #19: If you were calling for a specific person, you reached that person easily?			
% Pilots	59%	23%	19%
% AMTs	61%	20%	19%
Question #20: If you were not calling for a specific person, you easily found someone who could give you the service you needed?			
% Pilots	64%	23%	13%
% AMTs	60%	26%	14%

Accessibility of Information or People by Phone

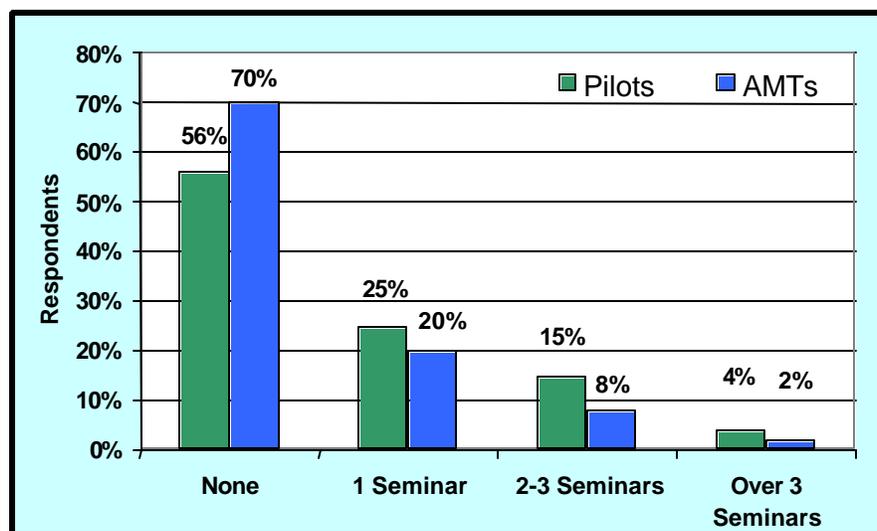
AVIATION SAFETY PROGRAM

The Aviation Safety Program sponsored by Flight Standards includes 160 Safety Program Managers located throughout the nation who have been producing safety-related audiovisuals and publications and conducting safety seminars or clinics for pilots since 1971. In 1993, Flight Standards expanded the Aviation Safety Program to include AMTs with the development of specialized airworthiness seminars and informational materials. Though available to all AMTs, the majority of AMT participants are involved in general aviation. Flight Standards has made efforts in collaboration with industry within the last 2 years to increase participation of both air carrier and general aviation AMTs in the Aviation Safety Program.

AVIATION SAFETY SEMINAR ATTENDANCE

Flight Standards surveys have consistently shown that the Aviation Safety Program is effective and efficient in providing airmen with the knowledge of current and new regulatory requirements, technological changes, and changes in safety responsibilities within the National Airspace System. However, the 1998 AMT Customer Satisfaction Survey indicated that only 30 percent, or 7,179 of the AMT respondents had attended at least one safety seminar, with only 10 percent or 2,371, having attended two or more seminars. In comparison, the pilots who attended seminars were greater by 14 percent, and those who attended more than one seminar exceeded the AMTs by 9 percent (Figure 25). Flight Standards contends that the statistics do not give the fullest picture of the current popularity of the program and attendance at the seminars. Since the Aviation Safety Program for pilots has been in existence longer and is more established, it is natural that it would draw more participants. Currently, more than 14,000 safety seminars (pilot and AMT) are held yearly with an average class size of 60 attendees.

FIGURE 25



Pilot and AMT Attendance at Aviation Safety Seminars

QUALITY OF SAFETY SEMINARS

Soliciting survey responses regarding whether or not attendance at safety seminars resulted in “safer” AMTs represented a shift from quantity as measured by participation to quality as measured by increased safety. Since we are unable to test participants, we relied on their level of confidence in the program to assess its effectiveness. Essentially, their responses to this question revealed their level of confidence in the program to achieve its stated aim to increase the level of safety through training and standardization. Reviewing the responses of the AMTs in contrast to the pilots, a higher percentage of pilots agreed that safety seminars made safer aviation professionals. In fact, the percentage of positive pilot responses outnumbered those of AMTs 88 percent to 67 percent. The pilot respondents were more likely to recommend safety seminars than were the AMTs, 70 percent versus 56 percent. Finally, over one-half of the pilots responded that they would attend safety seminars in the next year (52 percent), while only just over one-third of the AMTs (36 percent) responded positively to the same question (Table 3).

TABLE 3

Question	% of Positive Pilot Responses	% of Positive AMT Responses
Do you agree that Safety Seminars make safer Pilots/AMTs?	88%	67%
Do you recommend Safety Seminars to other Pilots/AMTs?	70%	56%
Will attend more Safety Seminars in the next year?	52%	36%

Questions Regarding Quality of Safety Seminars

AVIATION SAFETY COUNSELOR PROGRAM

Despite the disparity within the responses to prior questions, nearly the same percentage of pilots (18 percent) and AMTs (17 percent) were aware that they could become Aviation Safety Counselors. Counselors are proposed by Safety Program Managers and appointed by FSDO managers to assist Flight Standards in giving seminars designed to broaden and refresh technical knowledge. These AMT volunteers serve as counselors, sharing their technical expertise and professional knowledge with the aviation community. As in response to the low percentage of pilots who were aware that they could become counselors, Flight Standards has made a commitment to publicize the program and its benefits within the AMT community.

FAA/NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STOCK CAR AUTO RACERS (NASCAR) AMT AWARDS PROGRAM

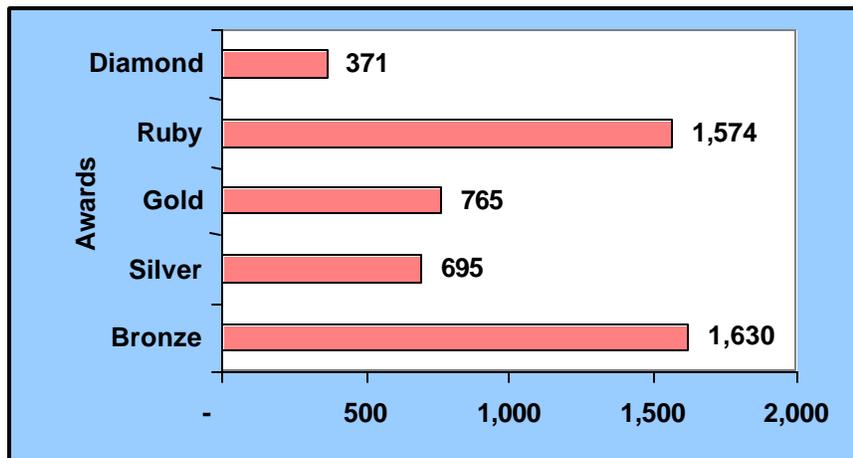
As was explained in the National Pilot Customer Satisfaction Survey report, Flight Standards encourages pilots to establish a regular recurrent training program and participate in the Pilot Proficiency Award Program commonly known as WINGS. The counterpart to WINGS is the FAA/NASCAR AMT Awards Program sponsored in partnership with industry. Under the awards program, Flight Standards and industry together encourage AMTs to raise their technical skill levels through attendance at safety seminars or courses at FAA-approved maintenance schools. Recognition awards are provided by Flight Standards based on the completion of 6 to 100 hours of training. Table 4 illustrates the number of training hours required for each recognition award level. Approximately 5,000 respondents reported that they had received AMT awards (some received more than one) with the most popular being the Ruby and Bronze awards (Figure 26).

TABLE 4

Type of Recognition Award	Hours of Training Required for Eligibility
Bronze	6
Silver	12
Gold	26
Ruby	58
Diamond	100 (usually fulfilled by attending college courses)

Training Hours Required For Recognition Awards

FIGURE 26



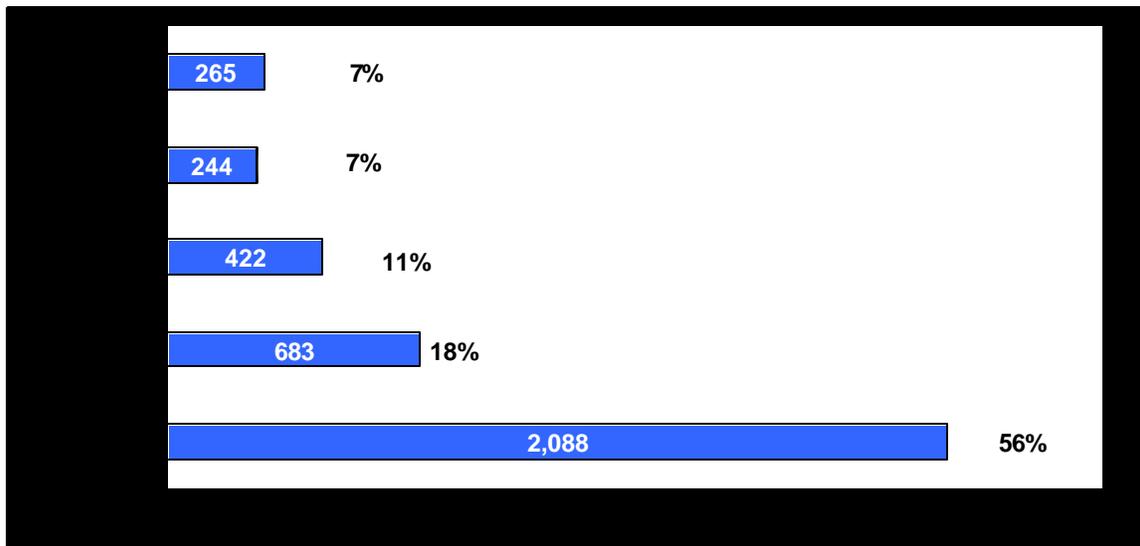
AMT Awards Received by Respondents

Customer Satisfaction Survey data supported Aviation Safety Program data that was collected separately and indicated that the popularity of and participation in the program have grown. To date, Flight Standards has issued over 20,000 Recognition Awards. Looking at survey results only, 56 percent of the awardees received awards within 1 year of

the survey with a reduction down to 7 percent within 5 years or more of the survey (Figure 27). Stated conversely, this equates to a growth from 265 awards to 2,088 awards within 5 years.

Flight Standards' partnership with industry has greatly affected the growth of this program. In 1995, a Flight Standards aviation safety inspector noted that participation in the awards program was low. Knowing that many AMTs were "dual" qualified—aircraft mechanics who also perform auto maintenance—and enjoyed the excitement of auto racing, he approached NASCAR to determine its interest in sponsoring a contest to encourage AMTs to work continually to seek out training and improve their skills. Based on NASCAR support, a contest was arranged locally in North Carolina. Local participation increased 750 percent. In 1997 the contest went nationwide, and sponsorship has grown to include other organizations like airlines, schools, training providers, universities, and professional associations. Today having earned a Recognition Award during the previous year, an AMT is eligible to compete for 20 or more donated prizes that are awarded based on a national drawing from eligible applicants. Prizes have included association memberships, trips to conventions, vacations, scholarships for training courses, software programs, and laptop computers. (Appendix III contains a listing of all prizes for the 2001 contest.) Flight Standards looks forward to continued growth in the FAA/NASCAR AMT Awards Program and the corresponding increase in aviation safety. More information is available to the public about the program on the Web site <http://www.faa.gov/fsdo/awsp>.

FIGURE 27



AMT Awards Received by the Respondents

CERTIFICATION

Only 3 percent of all the AMT respondents answered questions pertaining to Certification by reporting that they had temporary certificates or additional ratings added to their certificates during the previous year. Of this small subset of respondents, 90 percent agreed that the results reflected their skills and knowledge accurately; 88 percent said that the examiner acted courteously; 85 percent reported that the examiners explained the results clearly to them; and 83 percent agreed that the examiner represented the FAA favorably. While these are positive ratings, it would be inaccurate to make a generalization to the whole population based on such a small percentage of responses.

Most AMTs make use of Designated Mechanic Examiners, commonly referred to as designees, who are representatives of the Administrator and authorized to issue certificates. Designees are appointed by Flight Standards and renewed every 24 months. Each FSDO retains a listing of designees who are currently qualified to administer examinations and, although they work independently, their biennial renewal includes 8 hours of training at standardization workshops in Oklahoma City. Presently, there are 426 designees. Nearly all AMTs use their services for initial certification and additional ratings. In the future, Flight Standards may focus customer satisfaction surveys on the services provided by designees to both pilots and AMTs to gain a more accurate indication of the quality of service provided on behalf of the FAA.

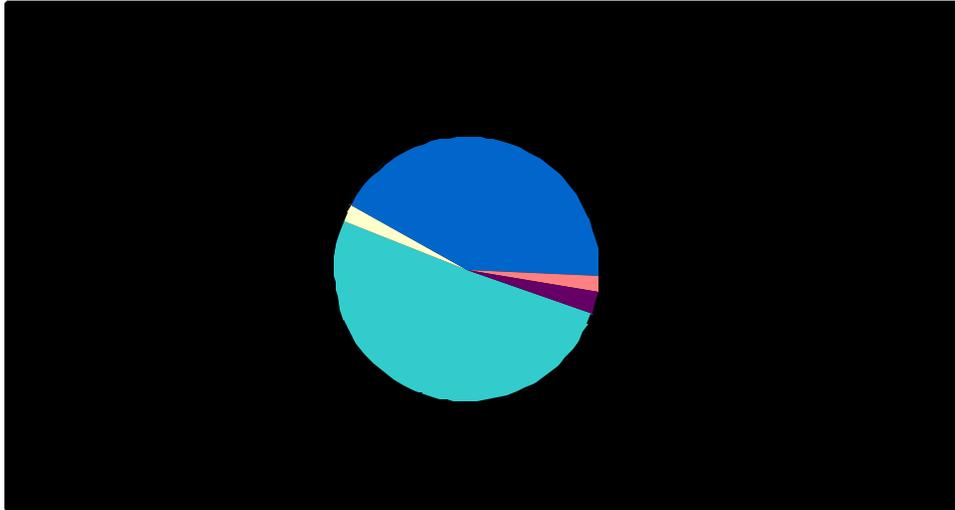
INSPECTION AUTHORIZATIONS (IA)

Of all the AMT respondents, 3,778 reported that they held an Inspection Authorization. This amounts to 11 percent of the total respondents. When asked if they had renewed their authorization during 1998, 3,515 responded “yes” to the question. This translated into 93 percent of the Inspection Authorization holders renewing their certificates during the year of the survey. It is a regulatory requirement for aviation professionals with Inspection Authorization to renew their certifications on or before March 31st of each year (see Title 14 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) part 65.92 (a)). The most popular methods of renewing were through work (annual inspection or major repairs or alterations [50 percent]), and FAA approved training (43 percent) such as an Aviation Safety Program Safety Seminar. Inspection Authorization can also be renewed through the performance or supervision of a progressively complex inspection or an oral examination administered by an aviation safety inspector (Figure 28).

When asked for feedback about the presentation of materials in Inspector Authorization Training and the relevance of information presented, the great majority of Inspection Authorization holders responded positively. Eighty-two percent agreed that the material presented was relevant and 81 percent reported that the material was well presented. We interpreted this as an endorsement of the Aviation Safety Program, since training for the

renewal of an Inspection Authorization⁷ is predominately accomplished through attendance at Aviation Safety Seminars.

FIGURE 28



Methods of Inspection Authorization Renewal

⁷ Information on initial Inspection Authorization certification is available in FAA document entitled, "Inspection Authorization Knowledge Test Guide, FAA-8082-11." An AMT can also attend classes or seminars to prepare for the test. They are offered by private companies and not sponsored by Flight Standards.

COMPLIANCE

The 4 percent or 1,060 of the total survey respondents who had received Letters of Investigation in the past 3 years were asked to answer the two questions below. Although not a large enough group to skew the survey, it is useful to note their responses to the questions regarding appropriateness of the sanction and courtesy.

Question 45: “How much would you agree that the sanction was appropriate for the violation?”

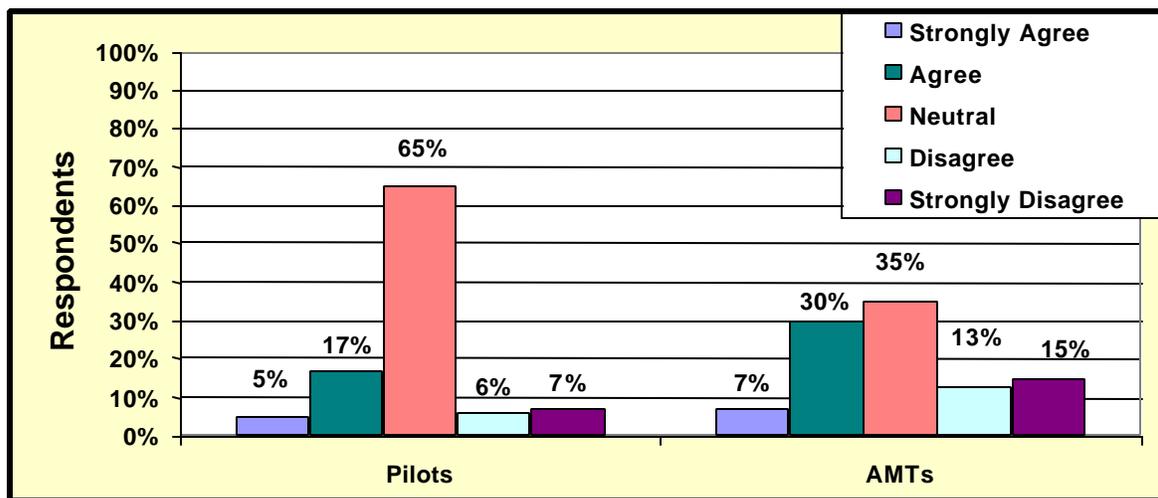
Question 46: “How much would you agree that Flight Standards personnel acted courteously [when giving the violation]?”

SANCTIONS

Thirty-five of the respondents were neutral on the question addressing the appropriateness of the sanctions for the violations; 37 percent agreed that they were appropriate for the violations; and 28 percent, or 291 of the total respondents, disagreed. Since the latter represented such a small number of AMTs, we did not draw any statistical conclusions about this group.

Figure 29 is a comparison between pilots and AMTs regarding Question 45 and the appropriateness of the sanctions. There was a 30 percent difference in the neutral responses between the two groups of airmen. While 22 percent of the pilots agreed that the sanctions were appropriate, 37 percent of their maintenance counterparts agreed. The higher level of agreement with the sanctions among AMTs was balanced by the 28 percent who disagreed. This contrasted with pilots, only 13 percent of who disagreed with the appropriateness of the sanctions.

FIGURE 29



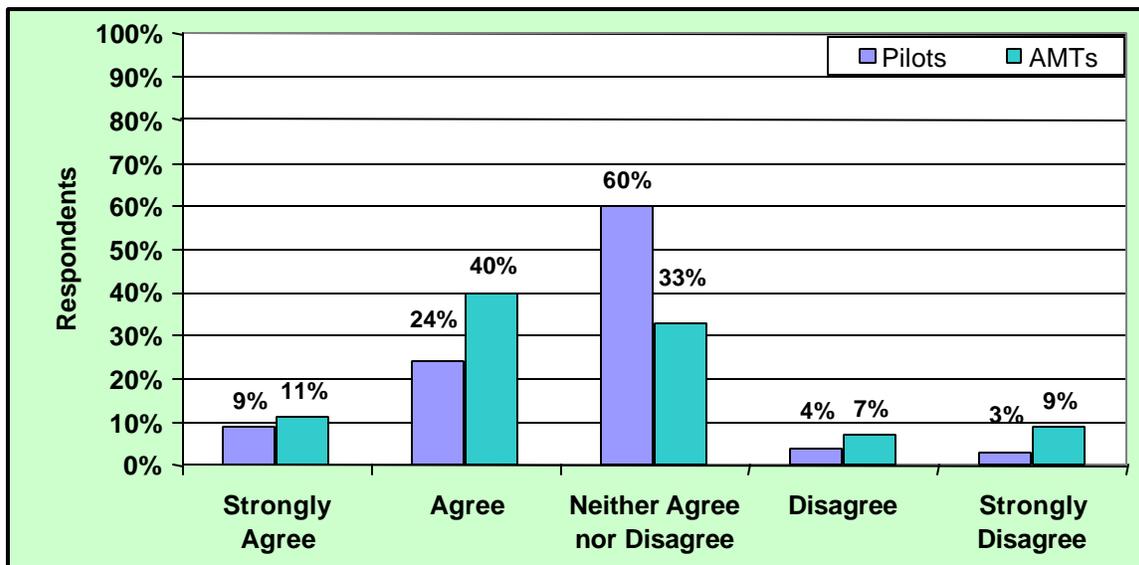
Appropriateness of Sanctions Received

COURTESY OF FLIGHT STANDARDS PERSONNEL

One third of the AMT respondents were neutral when providing input on Flight Standards employees acting courteously when giving violations. However, 51 percent of the AMTs agreed that Flight Standards personnel were courteous and only 16 percent disagreed. It was not possible to determine why there was such a large neutral response, but analyses of survey data at the regional and FSDO levels should provide more specific information on the courteousness of Flight Standards personnel.

Comparing both response groups from the 1998 surveys, more AMTs than pilots indicated that Flight Standards personnel were courteous (51 percent versus 33 percent). By the same token, AMTs responded more often than the pilots did that Flight Standards personnel had not been courteous (16 percent versus 7 percent). Sixty percent of pilots were neutral on the subject, while only 33 percent of AMTs reported that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement (Figure 30). Flight Standards must do further studies to help explain the overall discrepancies between the data provided by the pilots and AMTs.

FIGURE 30



Courtesy of Flight Standards Personnel When Giving Violations

FLIGHT STANDARDS ACTIONS

The AMT Customer Satisfaction Survey provided valuable information on how maintenance professionals perceived the customer service provided by Flight Standards personnel. We learned that as an organization we must concentrate on improvements within the focus areas of *Communication*, *Aviation Safety Program*, and *Access to Information*. This supported much of what we already had learned from our pilot customers. However, we must not neglect the other focus areas and strive for continuous improvement. As we reported in the National Pilot Customer Satisfaction Survey report, it is important to develop interventions to effect improvement and continue to sustain programs and services that meet the needs and expectations of our customers. Since the two groups reported similar deficiencies, many of the following actions were also included in the pilot survey report.

COMMUNICATION

As we reported in earlier sections of this report, we combined the two focus areas of *Communication* and *Access to Information* into one based on their close relationship and referred to it as *Communication*. Analyzing all the data collected under this one focus area, Flight Standards concluded that the aggregate level of satisfaction reported by AMTs communicating with the FSDOs was relatively high, but there is still a need for improvement. The information provided by the AMTs emphasized that we, as an organization, must look beyond the actions we have taken since the 1993 Customer Satisfaction Survey to improve communication both internally within Flight Standards and externally with our customers. In addition, we must improve the standardization or the consistency of information provided to our customers by different organizational units within Flight Standards as well as individual employees. Analyses of the AMT survey results at the regional and field office levels will assist us in developing specific corrections at identified locations.

Flight Standards is dedicated to improving customer satisfaction under the general category of communication. All newly hired aviation safety inspectors attend mandatory indoctrination training courses at the FAA Academy, including Professionalism for Aviation Safety Inspectors (Course 12030). The curriculum includes 34 classroom hours in communications with course materials conveying general concepts in communicating on-the-job and professional conduct required of all aviation safety inspectors. Inspectors receive instruction on oral and written communication, interviewing concepts, conflict management, listening skills, teamwork, and critical thinking processes. Topics are presented and followed by workshops featuring role playing and peer critique. The workshops provide an opportunity to practice effective presentation and communication skills.

Whether in the classroom at the FAA Academy or in the workplace, Flight Standards management officials hold employees to the same requirements. We stress courtesy, promptness, and accuracy as national standards. If an unacceptable situation such as inadequate or unsatisfactory internal or external communication comes to the attention of management, it is reviewed immediately. Managers and supervisors hold employees accountable for their lack of courtesy and take steps to correct deficiencies through

counseling, guidance, and if necessary, disciplinary actions.

Flight Standards is addressing accountability under its strategic planning process. An Accountability Plan has been drafted with its key components including the efficient promotion and accomplishment of the Flight Standards mission and integration of our organizational mission through the business plan, performance management agreements, and reward systems. In addition we anticipate that the Accountability Plan will foster better internal communication and understanding by each employee as to how his or her job functions support the overall organizational goals and objectives. Furthermore, every employee must understand that he or she is accountable to both internal and external customers while accomplishing our mission requirements.

With the rapid expansion of the Internet, Flight Standards progressively supports its use as the most cost-effective way to release and distribute accurate and timely information data and facilitate **external** communication. Nearly two-thirds (67 percent) of the respondents reported having access to the Internet, and if the survey were done today, our customers would report a great increase in use. Flight Standards continuously supports FAA-wide efforts to improve the agency's public Web sites (<http://www.faa.gov>) that were recognized by Federal Computer Week (April 24, 2000) as one of the "10 Sites to Watch;" sites that were "paving the way to digital government." Recently Britannica.com Internet Guide awarded three stars (or a rating of "excellent") to the FAA Web site based on the criteria of accuracy, usefulness, depth and breadth of information; credentials and authority of the author or publisher; quality of design, graphics, and multimedia; ease of navigation; and timeliness of revision.

Anyone with Internet capabilities can access the Flight Standards Web site directly at <http://www.faa.gov/avr/afshome.htm> or through the FAA Web site. It provides a wealth of material and presents the opportunity to gain information from the aviation safety inspector handbooks, Federal Aviation Regulations, advisory circulars, and other policy documents. The user is able to access a District Office Locator for employee listings, telephone numbers, and addresses. Also, considerable information is available concerning general aviation, aviation maintenance, air transportation, and international aviation. Hyperlinks provide access to commonly used FAA forms, and safety-related information pertaining to aircraft, airlines, and aviation-related schools. The Flight Standards Web site continually grows and improves as we make available additional information of an interest to both the general and aviation-specific public.

Communication is extremely important to standardization; therefore, inadequacies in internal communication produce negative effects on standardization. The consistency of information provided to any of our customers is directly dependent on the adequate and timely communication or distribution of information between Flight Standards policy offices located in headquarters and the field level offices. Consequently, Flight Standards employs the advancements in technology and Intranet capabilities to expedite the distribution of policy information and requirements to all employees via their office computer workstations. We provide electronic access to policy documents, regulations, hyperlinks to databases, and industry sites.

While current technology increases internal communication, it does not lessen the importance of person-to-person contact. To promote standardization between regional and national technical policy requirements, managers from both the policy divisions at headquarters and the technical branch managers from the nine regions began quarterly meetings⁸ in January 2001. They have selected focus areas of policy to target for review and correction of any discrepancies. The areas include, but are not limited to, coordination with the Aircraft Certification Service, regulation of Repair Stations, approval of air carrier manuals, and flight reviews. While national policy prevails, the regional representatives bring their perspective and initiate changes. To facilitate greater communication, all concerns and questions are sent to headquarters then tracked. The tracking system is viewable by all employees through the Flight Standards Intranet site, Communications Central. Together with regular meetings of the larger group, smaller workgroups concentrating on identified focus areas discuss the specific points of the standardization initiative.

To improve our organization, including the correction of communication weaknesses, Flight Standards is examining internal organizational work processes. Our plans encompass the review and redesign of core business processes to facilitate our mission needs in a more efficient and effective manner. Based on the principles of Performance Quality Management Improvement, Flight Standards will improve our business environment to ensure a better integration and communication of requirements within Flight Standards and with our customers.

AVIATION SAFETY PROGRAM

As was discussed in the *Aviation Safety Program* section of this report, the program is a very effective and efficient method to provide airmen with information on regulatory requirements, technological advances changes, and changes in safety responsibilities within the National Airspace System. It is difficult for the FAA to quantify accident and incident prevention efforts but, during the last 10 years, general aviation accidents have been declining. Flight Standards believes there is a direct link between this decline in accidents and loss of lives and our proactive approach to providing safety information to the aviation community. The introduction of the FAA/NASCAR AMT Awards Program Contest provides more than adequate incentives for AMTs to further and extend their skill bases.

No matter how successful the current program, Flight Standards is striving for improvement with a 5-year strategic plan for the Aviation Safety Program. Under the plan, we have defined expanding partnerships with industry organizations and continuous relations with the Professional Aviation Mechanics Association, Aviation Electronics Association, National Business Aviation Association, and others as priorities. We are also committed to the continuous development of the Safety Counselor Program through the increased recruitment of the best and most safety-conscious AMTs as counselors. With the majority

⁸ While executives from headquarters and the regional division managers have been meeting regularly to discuss policy, guidance, and national programs, this is the first time that managers of technical branches in the regions and headquarters division managers (who are responsible for creating national policy) have met to discuss these topics. The discussion is directed toward standardizing policy at the operational level.

of safety seminars presented by safety counselors, an increase in the number of counselors will have a direct effect on the number of seminars that are presented annually.

Flight Standards also intends to expand the Aviation Safety Program customer base. According to the strategic plan, we will extend the program in the next five years beyond individual pilots and AMTs to three additional groups within the aviation community: air carriers, repair stations, and CFR part 141/147 schools. In addition, we will continue to market the program to internal customers, such as other organizations within the FAA and the Department of Transportation. We are actively developing new media-based safety programs and implementing human factors-specific training sessions, further identifying members of our customer base, and marketing our safety programs to this targeted audience. Though the Aviation Safety Program is primarily for domestic air carriers, foreign operators whose routes include destinations within the United States are interested in the program. In 2001, the program managers plan to develop a CD-ROM for distribution to foreign air carriers so that they too can use this program to help increase their safety margins.

CERTIFICATION

Flight Standards is dedicated to developing and conducting a variety of seminars for designated examiners to promote awareness of changes in regulations and standards as they are applied to individuals who are seeking either their initial or additional ratings. Examples of these seminars are Recurrent Designated Mechanic Examiner Standardization and Recurrent Technical Personnel Examiner Standardization. The seminars are conducted around the country so that designees are trained and current in the geographic regions in which they work. Additionally, Flight Standards distributes an information and guidance kit that contains specific directives and documents necessary for designees to perform their authorized functions. Furthermore, Flight Standards contributes to standardization through publication of the quarterly Designee Newsletter and the monthly Aviation Maintenance Alerts (AC 43-16).

Recently, much attention has been focused on the diminishing number of students who attend Aviation Maintenance Schools as well as the increasing number of graduates who elect to pursue career paths other than aviation. Some air operators, having experienced the difficulties of recruiting, are offering signing bonuses for newly hired AMTs. In the past, AMTs have made major concessions in salary during the lean times for the airline. However, in many cases their unions are negotiating substantial wage increases currently. In response to projected future shortages of certificated maintenance personnel within the aviation industry, Flight Standards is encouraging associations and industry groups to sponsor activities within the aviation community to raise the awareness that interest in the field of aviation must be cultivated at all levels. In addition, to generate interest in aviation maintenance by students at both the high school and middle school levels, Aviation Safety Inspectors and particularly Safety Program Managers often participate in career days at local schools and invite students to sponsored safety seminars. They also make presentations both formally, at 147 schools or air shows, and informally, by taking questions from the public. Until recently, an AMT could not use his or her credits from an approved CFR part 147 school towards an academic degree. In response to a growing interest, Flight Standards worked with the American Council of Education to establish equivalent academic credit for

maintenance courses. Thus, a mechanic graduating from an approved CFR part 147 school can apply those courses towards a college degree and receive up to 67 credits.⁹

Many times, a graduate of an Aviation Maintenance School does not pursue aviation as a career option. He or she takes his or her skills to a company that requires machinists, not necessarily AMTs, and offers superior pay and conditions. However when they have applied for entry-level positions within the aviation industry, some airlines have expressed dissatisfaction with their degree of practical knowledge. When given a practical maintenance task to perform on an aircraft as a part of an application process, many applicants are unsuccessful. In response, Flight Standards is considering a Student Mechanics Certificate that would allow recipients to perform limited functions under an apprenticeship prior to applying for further ratings. Such an action would allow mechanics to gain valuable experience--experience that would help ensure success as an employee. If they were encouraged to perform an apprenticeship as part of the ratings process, they might be more likely to perform well as AMTs.

In order to assure the quality of the training of AMTs, Flight Standards has begun to evaluate the curricula offered by institutions as approved under CFR part 147 to teach aviation maintenance courses. This evaluation ensures that the institutions actually are teaching the material specified in the regulations. In addition, we are evaluating current curriculum requirements to determine any necessary modifications due to technological advances.

COMPLIANCE

Even though the majority of AMTs recorded neutral responses to this focus area, Flight Standards is not overlooking the opportunity to improve aviation safety through increased compliance with regulatory requirements while simultaneously focusing on our associated customer service. Our emphasis is on preventing accidents by learning and teaching mitigation of risk factors through activities like the Aviation Safety Program and the FAA/NASCAR AMT Awards Program Contest. But when we must confront a situation of non-compliance, all personnel are expected to apply our requirements of courtesy, promptness, and accuracy.

⁹ A complete listing of accreditation requirements and American Council of Education affiliated schools may be obtained by accessing their website at <http://www.acenet.edu>.

CONCLUSION

When Flight Standards designed the Customer Satisfaction Survey, our goal was to define our service as perceived by our customers and to develop interventions and corrections to improve accordingly. The findings of both the pilot and AMT Customer Satisfaction Surveys are assisting the organization to prioritize areas of change. Analyzing and interpreting the information supplied, we realized the need for improvements in communication and the standardization of information provided to our customers. Furthermore, we saw not only the need to emphasize these areas; we gained information on the specific scope to which these needs are manifest.

Though no single question or category of questions on the survey instruments provided highly negative rates of response, it is important to remember that we must remain committed to continuous improvement. As we compile the survey findings specific to our regional and field offices, we will be able to identify more specific areas in which we must improve our customer service. Our commitment to developing interventions and solutions will be documented in performance plans developed annually at the national, regional, and field office levels. Our accomplishment of these interventions will be published annually, and future customer surveys will serve as performance measures to determine our rate of success.

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 2

APPENDIX 3
