

The PLST Buzz

By Colin Bane

Over the last decade, NATA's Safety 1st Professional Line Service Training (PLST) has become the industry standard for training and recurrently training line service professionals. NATA recently gave PLST a distinctly 21st century overhaul, updating the renowned video training program into a highly interactive online training course to address the education needs of all line service specialists at FBOs large and small.

As the first round of professionals completes the new online PLST, the response has been strong.

"In a larger FBO they split the duties up and can afford to have specialists, but here, on a smaller FBO with less people and everybody on the ground doing multiple things, the level of education and all-around training has to be much higher," said Gary Davis, line service manager at Don Davis Aviation in Henderson, Ky. "Everybody has to know how to do pretty much everything, and we're finding that the Safety 1st training is indispensable."

Davis was one of the first to complete the new training and is recommending it to everyone on his ground team and to colleagues throughout the industry.

"I thought the training was wonderful, and I actually learned quite a bit more from it than I might have expected as somebody with a lot of experience in the industry," Davis said. "I think it is going to be very helpful for anybody in line service. No matter what you're doing, you want to always be thinking about the safest and most efficient way to do it. I believe it is absolutely worth it to raise the safety awareness of all your employees, and I can't think of a more effective way than to send people through the Safety 1st training."

At some FBOs, like Georgia's Midcoast Regional Airport at Wright Army Airfield, line service supervisors are already requiring the Safety 1st PLST for everybody on the line.

"I'm a professional line service technician with 13 years of training and experience in the Air Force and now also on the ground here at Mid-

coast Regional Airport, and I'm pleased to report that the Safety 1st training was worth every minute," said Barry Aston. "In our job, safety has to be priority number one. Even if you've been doing the job for a while, it's always good to have a refresher and to refocus on safety and staying up to date. I know I needed the refresher, and it's comforting to know that everybody I work with will have the same base of knowledge when we're out there operating as a team."

PLST Online includes detailed training on all topics required of line service specialists and is broken into eight separate training modules: Introduction and Ground Servicing, Safety, General Fuel Servicing, General Towing Procedures, Fuel Farm Management, Customer Service, Fire Safety, and Aviation Security.

Each training module consists of an introduction, topical and interactive training materials, and practical exams. The training is self-paced; trainees can move on only once they have proven mastery of the training materials in each module.

"One of the challenges we had was to appeal not only to those who are new in the industry or

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new in a particular line service position, but also to those out there working who have tremendous knowledge and experience," said Amy Koranda, director of safety management at NATA's Safety 1st division. "I think we've been successful in finding that sweet spot. This program enables everybody to learn something no matter how long they've been in the industry, and so far the response has been tremendous."

Simon Wade, training and safety manager, Universal Aviation in London, appreciates these aspects of the training. "I must say that this online format is very good in terms of pace," he said. "If you didn't quite get something, you could play the section again. Also, as a trainer, asking questions throughout is a very good touch. All in all, I look forward to going through the remainder of the program."

Tim Nestler, facilities manager at South Florida Jet Center, a subsidiary of Hop-A-Jet Worldwide Jet Charter, said the Safety 1st PLST is an asset to any FBO or any aviation company.

"Even for someone like myself with 21 years in the aviation industry, I would say it's definitely worthwhile," he said. "You're going to learn a huge

array of new things no matter what kind of experience you have going in. The information covers everything from A to Z, and when you complete it you're going to have a much more comprehensive understanding about everything on the line."

Nestler said the importance of training and re-training employees cannot be underestimated.


"No FBO can afford to have people getting complacent in their jobs," he said. "There's a real danger in complacency, especially in a smaller airport where security and safety are really everybody's responsibility. I have ten line service employees, and they're all taking the PLST on the job."

"The line service specialists are really the lifeblood of any FBO, and in many instances they make the first and last impression that anybody coming to or leaving from an airport in an aircraft will see," Koranda said. "Many of our businesses realize that those impressions are critical, and they understand the absolutely crucial role that these folks on the ramp play. You want your customers to leave thinking, 'Wow, that's a great FBO. I want to go back there because they know what they're doing, they take care of my aircraft, they take care of my passengers' needs, and they put safety first in everything they do.'"

"I think the strength of the new training is that it takes highly technical information and breaks it down, making it a little bit easier to assimilate," said Koranda, who worked with some of the industry's top line service trainers and aviation consultants to update the PLST and develop the new online training modules.

The need for standardized training for line service professionals could not be clearer: FBOs simply cannot afford to have safety or security incidents on the ground or in the air, and the line service specialists are the front line of defense to ensure that all runs smoothly.

PLST has the full support of NATA's Board of Directors, its Safety and Security Committee, the major aviation fuel providers, major insurance underwriters, and leading industry experts, as well as the enthusiastic endorsement of hundreds of FBOs nationwide. ■



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