

Peering Over Cylinders of Excellence

By Brett Levanto, Vice President of Operations, Aeronautical Repair Station Association

The 2026 FAA/EASA International Safety Conference presenters understand humor; if the audience laughs, build on the joke.

At the top of the first day, Administrator Bryan Bedford stated the goal of smashing FAA's "cylinders of excellence." The sardonic reference to the agency's "silos," a persistent target of every modern agency chief, garnered enough of a chuckle to be repeated countless times over the event's three days.

The Safety Conference convenes senior leaders from regulatory authorities, manufacturers, operators, maintenance providers, and industry associations worldwide. Through keynote addresses, "flash talks" (some flashier than others), and panel discussions, the agenda covers cross-disciplinary topics of regulatory oversight and practical advancement in aerospace.

The days spent with government leaders of aviation safety allow certain truths to emerge. The biggest is that it has all been said before. The FAA and EASA continually restate the excellence of their regulatory partnership. Attendees' bingo cards quickly fill with utterances of "safety," "culture," and "innovation."

Nonetheless, a few lessons make events like the Safety Conference valuable:

1. **Relationships matter.** Deputy FAA Administrator Chris Rocheleau made this point celebrating his decade-long cross Atlantic collaboration with Florian Guillermet, EASA executive director. As another statement of agency cooperation, it felt like a throwaway, but it is a reminder that international aviation is valuable. Long networking breaks allow for extensive discussion. The geography of the meeting space supports side meetings. As an ARSA enterprise member representative mused about attendance, the value is in being in the room.
2. **Getting out of your lane.** International aviation demands being cross-disciplinary. A session on pilot training standards yielded insight on the "negative training" impacts of poor program design and the limitations of training tools. For a maintenance-focused professional, competency outcomes and not the administrative structure of a training program is useful.
3. **Validate what you know.** Safety management systems can make every point about organizational reporting sound like an echo. Within those echoes are useful reminders, like an admonition against being so process-driven as to forget that outcomes matter more than procedural adherence.
4. **Active participation.** In addition to the side meetings and personal engagement, take every opportunity to add a voice. Multiple ARSA members asked questions and made comments during the scheduled "flash talk" on foreign drug and alcohol testing requirements. Though the talk was absent "flash" in the form of anything new or unreported by ARSA since the new rule's promulgation, those questions clearly demonstrated the interest — and attention to the association's communications — of the global maintenance community. Later discussion of performance-based rules illustrated how the absence of critical thinking imposes burden when the certificate holder shows but the agency can't find compliance.
5. **Industry implementation.** The top-level regulators don't ensure safety. Designers, producers, operators, and maintainers do. An educator and first-time attendee (who joined the event under an ARSA registration), noted that whatever the regulators say about where the industry is going, they don't know how to get there.

These reminders can serve aerospace professionals every day. While yet another administration seeks to break down the agency's "cylinders of excellence," and eyes rolls over the governmental tendency to protect turf and hoard information, a proactive industry can turn the agency's tragicomedy into practical, safety-focused evolution. AVM

Brett Levanto is vice president of operations of Obadal, Filler, MacLeod & Klein, P.L.C. managing firm and client communications in conjunction with regulatory and legislative policy initiatives. He provides strategic and logistical support for the Aeronautical Repair Station Association.



AVIATION MAINTENANCE magazine

AVM-MAG.COM

READ LATEST ISSUE AVM-MAG.COM/CURRENT

IMPRESSIVE Stats

THOUSANDS OF READERS. EVERY ISSUE. EVERY PLATFORM.

VERIFIED BY Google Analytics

80K+
READ THE WEBSITE EVERY MONTH
(650K+ OVER THE YEAR)

52K+
READ EVERY QUARTERLY DIGITAL FLIP BOOK (OR PRINT)

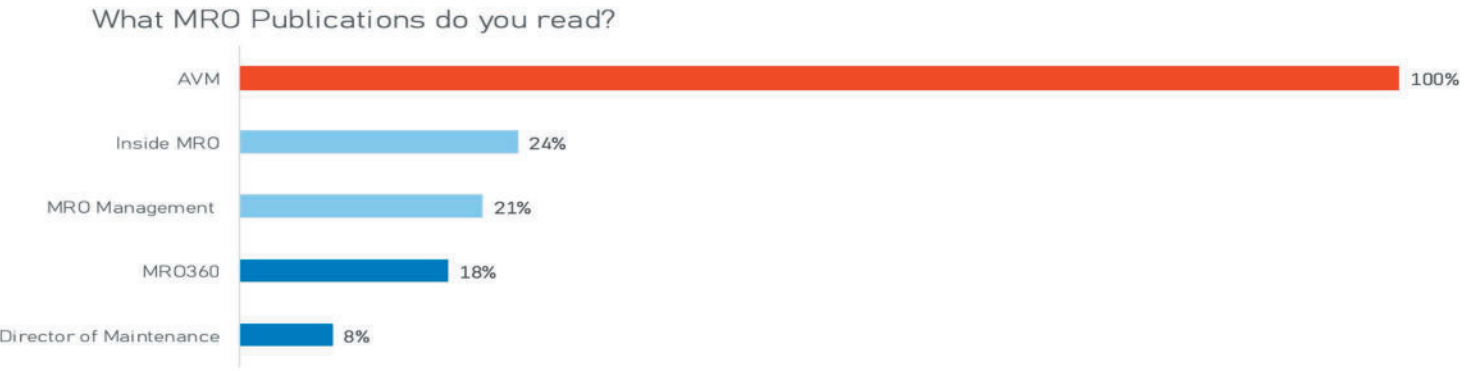
58K+
READ THE MAGAZINE VIA OUR IOS APP

45K+
FROM OUR DATABASE RECEIVE OUR REGULAR EMAILS

ENGAGED READERS. VALUABLE REACH.

POWERFUL IMPACT. PROVEN RESULTS.

Our reader subscription records show that you can't reach more than 24% of our loyal and unique readers via any other industry publication, proving Aviation Maintenance Magazine has the greatest MRO Reach.



If you are interested in reaching Aviation Maintenance Magazine's global MRO reach then fill out our form avm-mag.com/enquiry-form and we'll get back to you with some ideas to achieve your objectives and budgets.

Tan

ELEGANCE

COASTAL

TIMELESS

SERENITY

WARM

NATURAL

STYLISH

NEUTRAL

TIMELESS



WESTSTAR AVIATION

YOUR VISION. OUR PASSION.