

2025 Kyle Scott Aerobatic Dust-up Mid-Air Incident

Lessons Learned Report
Jeff Baker (Contest Director)

To the IAC leadership board and any other interested parties:

The mid-air incident that occurred on 8/31/25 during day 2 of the Kyle Scott Aerobatic Dust-up has sparked discussions about what can be learned to improve contest safety moving forward. To that end, IAC President Jim Bourke has asked me to share my observations and thoughts on what went well and what could have been improved regarding the contest's flight activities and incident response.

My thoughts below are not exhaustive as the NTSB investigation is ongoing. The Aviation Investigation Preliminary Report was released and can be found here:

<https://data.nts.gov/carol-repge/api/Aviation/ReportMain/GenerateNewestReport/200906/pdf>

Flight Ops Safety Improvement Suggestions

Fabian Salazar, the lead NTSB Air Safety Investigator assigned to this incident, has shared 3 initial safety improvement suggestions to be considered:

“As you know, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is currently investigating the mid-air collision accident that involved an Extra 300, N330AN and a Cessna 172M, N61657, (investigation number WPR25FA268) that occurred near Fort Morgan, Colorado on August 31, 2025. As previously discussed, I would like to share some safety suggestions that have emerged throughout the course of this investigation. These suggestions pertain specifically to flight operations and are intended to support the ongoing efforts to enhance aviation safety operations.

It is important to note that the items outlined below represent suggestions for possible improvements. They are not to be interpreted as formal Safety Recommendations from the Board Members of the NTSB. Rather, their aim is to help prevent future accidents and improve safety for pilots competing in future competitions.

Safety Suggestions:

- *Conduct a review of the common traffic advisory frequency (CTAF) monitoring and reporting plan to better share the responsibilities of monitoring and reporting non-participating aircraft to competitors as they exit the box, switch to CTAF and prepare to enter the traffic pattern.*
- *Conduct a Chapter 12 leadership meeting to discuss the possibility of implementing Chapter 12 specific Safety Pilot minimum requirements that are more restrictive than the International Aerobatic Club (IAC) rules for Safety Pilot, as they are outlined in the 2025 IAC Contest Rules, paragraph 4.5 "Safety Pilots."*
- *Chapter 12 leadership then coordinates with the IAC leadership to recommend changes to the IAC Contest Rules regarding Safety Pilots minimum requirements.*

Please know that these safety suggestions are generic in nature so that the experience of the Chapter 12 members can best determine exactly how the changes are developed and implemented."

The 3 bullets that Fabian outlines are generally aligned with my own thoughts on where consideration should be directed to improve flight ops safety. My view encompasses the following suggestions:

Section 4.5 Amendments

- Section 4.5.2 could be revised to clarify the standard required for prior competition experience. I think it would be appropriate to expect that the Safety Pilot's prior competition experience must be equal to or higher than

the category in which they will be participating as a Safety Pilot. Setting a minimum number of prior competition flights and/or flown contests could also be considered to ensure familiarity with the contest flight environment and demands.

- Section 4.5.3 could be revised to include a requirement that a chosen Safety Pilot should be checked out, in a manner deemed appropriate by the competitor and in alignment with standard aviation practices, to solo the specific type of aircraft that they will be flying in. A dangerous situation can be made worse if a competitor becomes seriously incapacitated during a competition flight and the Safety Pilot is not appropriately trained in the specific handling characteristics and landing dynamics of the aircraft. This undermines the rationale to include the Safety Pilot in the first place.
- An additional Section 4.5.6 could be considered to add a requirement that changes to a competitor's Safety Pilot plan need to be communicated to either the CD or the Chief Judge before a flight occurs. This will help to improve situational awareness for contest leadership in the event of an incident.

Section 2 Amendment

- Section 2.1.2 could include an air operations coordinator-type role to reflect the growing value of an "Air Boss" style role at contests.
 - Within Chapter 12, we have been using this position for several years to assist the Chief Judge in managing the airspace at non-towered contests and to ensure safe and efficient use of contest holds without the chance of interfering with flights in the box. We utilize a high-powered air-band VHF base station radio to listen to and communicate on CTAF and dedicated handheld air-band VHF radios tuned to the Hold and Box frequencies. This is that same set-up now in regular use at nationals and at the 2023 WAAC in Las Vegas.
- *Possible names for the position: Comms Manager, Air Ops Coordinator, Airspace Coordinator, Overlord (call sign in use at Air Force Academy contests and trialed with success this year at Nationals)

Section 11 or 14 Amendment

- To align with the inclusion of an air operations coordinator role, Section 14.1 could be updated to include an outline of how the Chief Judge can utilize that position to manage flow in and out of the box. Or an outline of this air operations role could be added to Section 11.

Incident Response: Successes

Below are my notes on things that went well on the 31st and might assist other contests in safety planning:

- Having a mobile incident response kit on site was important in aiding the first response group to stay safe while attempting to effect a rescue. The Chapter 12 kit includes the following:
 1. *6lb CO2 fire bottle*
 2. *Hi-Vis yellow Nomex jacket*
 3. Hi-Vis yellow Nomex quick-donning pants
 4. *Nomex gloves*
 5. Eye protection goggles
 6. *3-foot ax*
 7. Cutting snips
 8. Seatbelt cutting tool
 9. Surplus military smoke grenades
 10. *Large first aid kit*

*Italicized items were actively used during the incident response

- Having access to a pair of side-by-side ATVs (used by the Starter and CD) helped get the incident response kit out on scene quickly. Both ATVs facilitated our ability to get 5 people, the incident response kit, and the CO2 fire bottle on scene rapidly.

*These ATVs have been loaned to the contest for several years by a local farm equipment supply business.

- The Chief Judge notified 911 of the incident within a very short time after a line-judge called out the accident.
- The contest community did a good job of following a previously briefed directive that calling 911 was the responsibility of the Chief Judge/CD/Starter (depending on where the incident was) and not to all rush out to an accident scene.
- Neighboring farmers responded to the incident as well, and we were able to work with them to use a truck winch to flip the Extra right-side up in our final effort to rescue the trapped pilot.
- No serious injuries were sustained by any of the first responders.
- IAC 12 and IAC national leadership were all very helpful and compassionate in reaching out to provide assistance, guidance, and support to a lot of people affected by the incident.

Incident Response: Points of Improvement

Below are my notes on items that could have been improved upon or might have further aided the response on the 31st:

- The CO2 fire bottle did not make it to the incident scene with the first ATV. It had been strategically stationed on the ground at the starting line for quick access in the event of an engine start fire, but was forgotten in the heat of the moment when the Starter recognized the need to get the incident response kit

out to the crash site near the threshold of 14. I picked up the bottle on my way out to the incident, arriving shortly after the Starter's ATV.

- A 6lb CO2 fire bottle was inadequate to make any impact on the fuel fire that had developed at the site. Within a very short period, other larger foam-type fire bottles arrived at the scene. They were more effective in mitigating portions of the fire. Future planning for incident response kits might consider prioritizing the selection of a foam-based extinguisher due to the fuel fire risk or having one of each type to be more adaptable to unpredictable emergency situations.
- Prior knowledge of where additional fire response equipment is on an airfield. Mapping out hangars and fuel trucks that have rescue equipment could help speed up access to and delivery of those resources to an incident.
- Identifying an incident response volunteer team at the start of a contest. People with prior experience in first-aid, CPR, fire, or other emergency response training. At the start of a contest, this team could be briefed on the use of equipment in the response kit and/or onsite emergency response resources.
- It could be beneficial to have a guide outlining mental health resources available to victims, responders, and event participants that a contest leader could share as appropriate to help participants navigate grief, trauma, anxiety, and Acute Stress Response concerns.