

2016 BLM Airwards & Recognition



BLM Aviation
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Kirk Rothwell National Aviation Safety & Training Advisor



In-Flight Action Award Paul “Buster” Delmonte

On August 7th, 2016 Paul “Buster” Delmonte was taxiing to the runway at Burns Municipal Airport (BNO), OR when Mr. Delmonte and BLM Boise Smokejumper Jim Raudenbush thought they heard someone on the radio calling for help. While taking the runway they again heard a call for help from what sounded like a lost VFR pilot.

Once safely airborne Mr. Delmonte made a blind call for the pilot who sounded nervous and disoriented. The disoriented pilot responded that he didn’t know where he was at, his navigational aids were apparently broken and he was trying to make it to Burns, OR. The disoriented pilot stated he was flying near a big fire (there were several scattered fires across the horizon).

Mr. Delmonte made the command decision to delay the SJ mission; try to assist the pilot and he began taking action.

Mr. Delmonte queried the pilot about his point of departure, fuel state, and how long he’d been flying. He also asked if he had anyway of providing a latitude or longitude and asked the pilot if he tried contacting Salt Lake City (SLC) Center. He replied that he left Bend OR, thought he had four hours of fuel onboard, could not provide a latitude or longitude, and he wasn’t sure if he was airborne for one hour or two and half hours as his Tachometer didn’t seem to be working correctly. His poor sense of elapsed time had them concerned he was in a ‘lost-Situational Awareness’ debilitating state. He didn’t know how to utilize Center and sounded scared.

Due to Mr. Delmonte still climbing out of Burns, OR he was unable to reach SLC Center and began using an airliner for relay. He was able to secure an IFF squawk from SLC Center, he then talked the disoriented pilot through the steps to load and ident to SLC Center.

SLC Center was able to provide Mr. Delmonte a bearing and distance to the pilot. Twenty minutes later he was able to pick him up on the Traffic Collision Avoidance System (TCAS) and affect a rejoin.

Mr. Delmont and BLM Smokejumper Jim Raudenbush then escorted the pilot to Burns, OR talked him through his landing checklist items, and chased him through a straight-in landing. He then executed a go-around and proceeded to their designated mission. Burns Dispatch was aware of their actions throughout.

Congratulations on a job well done!



In-Flight Action Awards

In-Flight Action Award Louis Kuhn

On June 29, 2016 Louis Kuhn departed Allakaket, AK with one passenger on board to map the fires of the Alatna complex. As they were working their way around the first fire the right engine began to lose oil pressure. When the pressure drop reached 30 psi he shut down the engine and feathered the propeller. Mr. Kuhn remained calm and collected throughout the duration of the in-flight incident. As they returned to Allakaket he communicated with the ground personnel to be ready for a response. After he safely landed the aircraft ground personnel were ready with fire extinguishers and containment equipment for the oil that was leaking from the right engine.

Once on the ground Mr. Kuhn made arrangements for a mechanic to come to Allakaket. The cause of the leak was a pressure relief nut on the oil regulator that had backed out. Maintenance was completed quickly and the aircraft returned to service the same day.

Mr. Kuhn is a much respected pilot with many years of experience in Alaska. He demonstrated outstanding airmanship and leadership and by doing so prevented damage to the aircraft and injury to personnel.

Louis Kuhn is the Pilot in Command of an Aero Commander AC680FL on an exclusive use contract for the Alaska Fire Service. Louis has been an employee for Suburban Air Express for 31 years.

Reference SAFECOM: 16-0487



Airward



AIRWARD CITATION Chuck Greer

On June 28, 2016 a State of Alaska Department of Forestry Air Attack ship assigned to the Tanana Zone of the Alaska Fire Service landed in Bettles, Alaska to refuel and standby for nearby fires. The pilot, Chuck Greer, was a State of Alaska DOF employee {26,000+ hour pilot} and the ATGS a BLM Alaska Fire Service employee. Chuck called a local vendor to refuel the plane with 100 Low Lead {Av gas}. The truck came and fueled the plane with approximately 100 gallons. Chuck took the nozzle to finish fueling as he likes to top off the tanks himself. He immediately noticed something strange about the fuel; it was foamy and had a slight diesel smell. He stopped fueling and asked the fueler about the fuel. The fueler thought it was fine as it was blue in color. Chuck had also noticed that a little fuel had spilled into the dirt and left an oily patch instead of evaporating. He asked to check the fuel in the tank that filled the truck. The tank they had used was a back-up tank that had not been used since it was filled last winter, until that day. It was mostly empty but they put a stick in and smelled the residual fuel and did a finger test to see how slimy it was. They then got two clear jars and poured some fuel from the fuel truck into one and the fuel from another tank that was known to be clean into another jar. The fuel from the truck that had filled the plane was a lighter shade of blue than the good sample of fuel, smelled like diesel, and was slimy to the touch. The good sample of fuel was a darker blue, had no diesel smell, and evaporated quickly all of which indicated good fuel. The vendor agreed that it was contaminated. It took Chuck's persistence to check the fuel and keep asking multiple times over objections to test the fuel.

This pilot should be commended as the contaminated mixture could have allowed the aircraft to run for a while and even possibly during take-off. It might have taken off and then had both engines quit. His attention to detail and persistence was potentially a lifesaving act for his plane and others. This incident reinforces the necessity for every pilot to monitor the fueling of their aircraft and also check the fuel. Chuck displayed excellent situational awareness to notice what was happening and point it out to others. His positive actions led to correcting the problem, thus avoiding a possible mishap with his aircraft and alerting other aircraft of the hazard.

Reference SAFECOM: 16-0455



Certificate of Excellence

CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE

In recognition of your knowledge and attention to detail following a reported airspace intrusion. Your prompt actions and proper understanding of the dispatch system resulted in safer airspace for all interagency aviators. Your attention to detail and work ethic exemplifies the professionalism of BLM Aviation.

BLM-National Aviation Office hereby presents

Jen Medl

this Certificate of Excellence for a job well done!

Awarded on the 15th day of September 2016

Peterson Hollow Incident, managed out of NUIFC

Kirk Rothwell

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