Written by Ken Bannister, Contributing Editor
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Making A List And Checking It Twice

Over the holidays, I was one of the thousands upon thousands of passengers who boarded planes on the busiest air-travel day of the year and flew across the country or globe to visit family and friends. It takes a hectic day like that to truly appreciate how much we (both as travelers and maintenance professionals), as well as other industries, owe the aviation industry—*and how well the airlines' systems and processes work when stressed to the max.* Despite my personal lack of control over the situation, my plane departed on time, flew smoothly and arrived safely at the right destination. Moreover, even my luggage showed up exactly when and where it should have!

In life, there are often times when we must relinquish control. Such is the case when I must fly to a client's site or event. Unlike Tom Cruise or John Travolta, who own personal jet aircraft and are licensed to pilot themselves around the world, I need to rely on commercial aircraft and pilots. To reduce my risk as much as possible, I put myself in the hands of reputable organizations and people, and choose carriers based not on their ticket prices, but their safety records.

Thanks largely to the efforts of F. Stanley Nowlan and Howard H. Heap, travelling by air these days is much safer than in decades past. In the 1960s, Nowlan and Heap headed an industry group to develop a maintenance methodology that could reduce airline accident rates while increasing (and sustaining) the reliability of ever-more complex future-generation aircraft. The result, based on a simple seven-question process, was MSG-1—*or what we now refer to as R eliability Centered Maintenance (RCM).*
This methodology has been responsible for greatly increasing equipment reliability across all industries, while simultaneously simplifying levels of maintainability.

Going back even further in history, to those "magnificent flying machines" of World War I, we also can credit aviation with the advent of true scheduled maintenance: That was introduction of 30-, 60-, 90- and 120-hour airframe checklists for combat aircraft along with staggered scheduling—*providing planes lasted that long in combat!*

In his recent book, *The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right,* Dr. Atul Gawande describesthe first military test flight of the B17 bomber in the 1930s. Ending in a crash due to a simple pilot oversight, this flight led to the aviation industry pioneering operational and maintenance checklists. As head of the World Health Organization's Safe Surgery Saves Lives program, Dr. Gawande adapted the aircraft checklist and credits use of this simple, innovative tool for a dramatic reduction in hospital and surgical deaths, regardless of hospital conditions.

Designed correctly, a checklist can overcome both ignorance and ineptitude. Such a tool can be particularly effective in the field of lubrication where, so often, the wrong lubricant can be placed in the wrong place, in the wrong amount. . .

For more on the effective use of checklists, be sure to read the March 2013 installment of my *M aintenance Technology*
magazine column "Don't Procrastinate…Innnovate."

In the meantime, I wish all readers a very happy and prosperous 2013! **LMT**

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