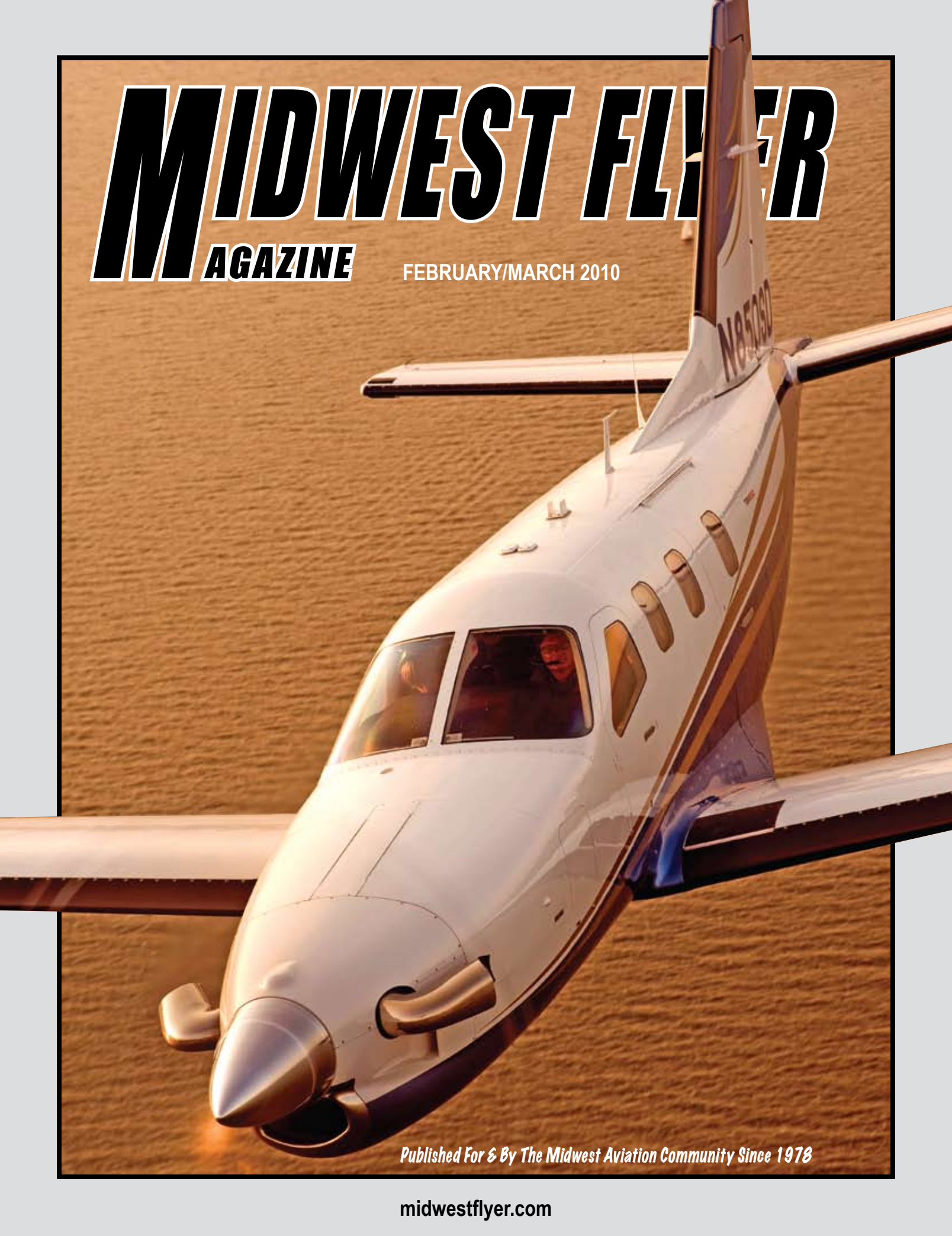


# MIDWEST FLYER

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grow and retain its international flair with participants and exhibitors from Canada and all over the United States. Select sessions and breaks are sponsored by industry representatives who support continuing safety education.

High school students from around the state are also expected to

participate in the conference. They will have the opportunity to meet with aviation business professionals, listen to aviation speakers and explore quality, affordable aviation education at Minnesota colleges and universities. Students will also have the opportunity to speak to and network with mechanics, pilots and

other aviation professionals who are working in aviation-related fields.

For more information about the 2010 Minnesota Aviation Maintenance Conference and to register online, go to: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/aero/avoffice/events>, or contact Janese Thatcher at 1-800-657-3922 x-7183. □

## “Unable”

by Nick Modders

One of my favorite monthly publications is “Callback,” the monthly missive from the National Aeronautics & Space Administration (NASA) that excerpts NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS) submissions. You know those reports as the NASA reports you send in every time you do something that might attract the attention of the “feds,” and if properly filed, the report may get you off the hook if the feds do notice.

In Callback 359, November, 2009, there was a tale titled “Ex-pe-DICEY” about a couple of aviators who were taxiing an MD-80 in winter conditions that included slippery ramps, taxiways and runways. As they approached the runway, the tower instructed them to “Expedite” their takeoff for traffic on final to another runway.

The cooperative captain added a whole bunch of power and promptly expedited himself right off the very slippery runway in a grand slide. So much for Mr. Nice Guy. Now it wasn't that they didn't know that the pavement was slippery. The evidence of winter was all over the place, several inches deep. And there was also ice under the snow. How could this happen?

Everything was going along fine until a voice said to “expedite.” Then all awareness of a difficult situation was discarded and the captain started acting like it was summer and went faster than he knew he should have. The question has to be “Who is taxiing the airplane?” Choices: the captain or the guy in the tower. The

guy in the tower is on a dry rug, so he did not slide anywhere. The guy in the airplane knew better, but sort of lost his discretionary powers and made a poor choice.

There were two choices in a situation like this: Go fast or go really slow, maybe stop. In the Air Traffic Control Procedures Manual the word “Expedite” is used to make something go faster to avoid an imminent situation. If you are taxiing, stopping could also avoid an imminent situation.

The decision is the pilot's and no one else's. Now the guy in the tower has only one reason for being there. Back in the good old days the Air Traffic Control Procedures Manual said that he was to provide for the safe, orderly and expeditious flow of air traffic. The wording is different now, but the idea is the same. The pilot is in the airplane to operate it in a safe and expeditious manner. Normally, the emphasis is on “safe.”

*So what is a pilot to do when the guy in the tower asks for something that is not in the best interest of the pilot?*

Now this rarely happens so most

pilots are not proficient in saying “NO.” Actually, “NO” is a poor choice of words, but “unable” is really a good word. If you can't do it, they can't make you, and other arrangements will be made.

This is all about operating the airplane safely. Who does that? The pilot does that. If Air Traffic Control asks for something that you as pilot-in-command cannot (or should not) do, help them out and advise them of that fact and it need not be a long, excuse laden, rambling statement. All you need to say is “unable.” That will undoubtedly be the end of the discussion.

(For our “Ex-pe-DICEY” captain, you can bet that wasn't the end of the discussion. Think of all the papers, phone calls, discussions with the chief pilot, etc., etc. “Unable” would have been a great response.) “Unable.”

*EDITOR'S NOTE:* Nick Modders is a retired U.S. Air Force Command pilot and a frequent contributor to the Minnesota DOT Office of Aeronautics Technical Bulletin.

#### REFERENCES.

NASA Callback

<http://asrs.arc.nasa.gov/publications/callback.html>

“Expedite” Airman's Information Manual-Pilot/Controller Glossary □

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