

Record numbers attend 3rd annual Smackdown safety seminar



Hands-on training was a significant part of the Smackdown experience. Attendees practice boarding a raft after a ditching exercise. Photo on right shows the cover that is used to protect crew and passengers from the elements.

Photos by Mike Potts

Partnership for Corporate Aviation Training (PCAT), based in San Antonio TX, held its 3rd annual Safety Smackdown on Feb 1–4, attracting more than 375 attendees from as far away as Washington state and even the UK.

Smackdown is a 3-day series of courses and workshops geared to supporting the training requirements of IS-BAO registered flight departments as well as those seeking to qualify for IS-BAO certification or just generally wanting to maintain a high level of safety and best practices. It is followed on the 4th day with an inspection authority (IA) renewal program for mechanics.

Luncheon speakers during Smackdown included former Shuttle Astronaut Tom Henricks and NBAA Senior VP Ops Steve Brown.

This year's event featured 14 classes geared to IS-BAO standards, including crew resource management, high-altitude physiology, marshalling, MEL training, safety management systems (SMS), water evacuation, Mexico flight ops, high-altitude aerodynamics, cold weather ops and fatigue countermeasures.

Some IS-BAO programs were provided by outside vendors, including MedAire, which offered CPR training, and FACTS, which had a trailer on site to perform cabin evacuation exercises as well as equipment and technicians for hypoxia exercises.

Other training categories at this year's Smackdown included an OSHA voluntary protection program on fire safety, fuel storage and management, aviation insurance and managing contract risk, aviation security, best practices programs on regulations affecting Part 91 passenger ops, human factors in maintenance operations, leadership for corporate aviation professionals, an update on RPN, LPV, GBAS and FANS, and the consequences of mission-driven decision-making.

There were also presentations on Part 139 fire training and international considerations for domestic operators.

In its 3 years of operation, PCAT has developed a close relationship with the US Air Force through San Antonio's proximity to Randolph AFB, and some Smackdown courses were taught by USAF personnel.

PCAT's Smackdown program is serving as a pattern for other regional

groups of flight departments seeking to develop their own low-cost training programs. A number of flight department managers attended this year's Smackdown with a view to launching similar regional programs of their own.

"Many Smackdown participants tell us this is a great way to accomplish a lot of the IS-BAO training requirements in a convenient and cost effective format," said John White, dir of corporate aviation at Valero. "Some of this training isn't readily available through normal training channels, so when you can bring it all together in one place and time for a low cost, it's very popular. I expect we'll see these kinds of programs being put together on a regional basis in the future with some regularity."

PCAT is a non-profit organization founded by 3 of San Antonio's more prominent corporate flight departments—Valero Energy, H-E-B Grocery and Zachry Construction—with the goal of improving training while reducing its cost and the time required to accomplish it. PCAT also serves as an advocate for traditional corporate and business aviation.
—Mike Potts



Space shuttle commander Tom Henricks talks with Smackdown attendees. A technician monitors a student as oxygen levels are reduced to simulate hypoxia. FACTS provided its mobile trailer equipped to simulate cabin evacuation and inflight emergency scenarios.