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Collaboration Yields Solution to Reduce Risk of Post-Impact Fires for Air Show Performers

(Atlanta, GA) January 12, 2012 – Aerobatic pilots Buck Roetman of Wild Horse Aviation, and Mike Stewart, Flight Lead for Team RV, announce an important safety solution for professional air show pilots to reduce the risk of a post-impact fire: an inertia activated shut-off switch installed in the ground wire to fuel and smoke oil pumps. Roetman said the easy installation of this inexpensive switch is an "elegant and simple solution that every performer in the air show industry should consider."

Roetman and Stewart sought this solution in response to the forced landing last March of Kyle and Amanda Franklin in which the smoke oil pump fueled a fire that caused fatal burns to Amanda. In the immediate aftermath of the accident, Roetman, who is an International Council of Air Shows (ICAS) ACE (Aerobatic Competency Evaluation) pilot, and ICAS President John Cudahy informally discussed the need to prevent post-impact fires in cases where fuel tanks are not ruptured.

Initial discussions among several pilots included the merits of various shut-off switches such as a GPS switch, EGT switch, and oil pressure switch. Ultimately, Stewart found and suggested the use of the inertia switch which is used in auto racing and acts like a circuit breaker, but is tripped by high g's (10g or higher) associated with impact.

According to Jim Hillyer at Pegasus Auto Racing Supplies, a top supplier of the switch, the product has been used successfully for years on IndyCars and on high-end production cars with fuel injection systems that engage high pressure fuel pumps.

Concerned about inadvertently tripping the switch, Stewart and Roetman installed the device on their aircraft – Stewart's RV-Super 8 and Roetman's modified Christen Eagle – and tested high g maneuvers as well as hard landings. The switch did not activate under a +8 g load or -5 g load.

Kyle Franklin is installing this equipment in all of his aircraft, and urges every air show and competition pilot to add this or something similar. The g-meter in his Waco stopped at 11g during his hard landing. "This little switch could save you and your loved ones a lifetime of pain and grief. I truly feel if I had this switch on March 12 my beautiful wife Amanda would still be here," said Franklin.

Stewart reported that all 12 pilots on Team RV have installed the light weight switch as part of pre-season aircraft maintenance procedures. "Air show performers keep safety at the forefront always, and when accidents do happen, they happen to friends in this tight community and not simply to 'someone else.' As a result we take it to task to learn as much as possible from incidents and to find ways to improve safety where possible," said Stewart.

[Wild Horse Aviation](#) specializes in aircraft acquisition, maintenance, fabrication and export.
[Team RV](#) is the world's largest precision formation and formation aerobatics air show team.

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