



Aircraft Towing and Pushback Operations

In this issue of *Inside Choice Aviation*, I want to discuss the critical importance of aircraft towing and pushback operations. While these procedures are considered routine ramp activities, they also present some of the highest operational risks in aviation ground handling. Safe towing operations require constant communication, situational awareness, teamwork, and strict adherence to established procedures. Even a brief lapse in coordination or attention can result in significant aircraft damage, operational delays, or serious injury. As flight activity continues to increase, it is essential that we remain focused on performing every tow and pushback operation with precision, professionalism, and safety as our top priority.

The Gold Standard: Precision Towing

Pre-Operation Integrity

- Ensure the pushback tractor is fully serviceable and pre-use inspections are complete.
- Verify towbar shear pins rotate freely and are not seized or restricted.
- Conduct a complete pre-tow briefing with all personnel involved.
- Confirm the steering bypass pin is installed or the bypass switch is disengaged before movement begins.
- Verify the aircraft safety area is clear of GSE, personnel, and FOD.

Communication: The "Three-Way" Rule

Clear communication and positive acknowledgment must exist at all times. If any team member loses sight of another team member, or, loses radio/headset communication, **STOP THE OPERATION IMMEDIATELY** until communication is restored.

Key Communication Requirements

- The pushback operator must maintain headset communication with the aircraft brake rider.
- Wing walkers must maintain visual contact with the tug operator.
- Orange wands are required during daytime operations.
- Illuminated wands are required at night or during reduced visibility.
- Movement must never begin until all "all clear" signals are received and acknowledged.

Speed & Spatial Awareness

- Tow speed should never exceed approximately 5 mph.
- Maintain complete control of the aircraft at all times.
- Respect all aircraft nose gear turning limits to avoid costly over-steer damage and downtime.



Critical Hazards & Prevention

HAZARD	PREVENTION
Jackknifing	Avoid sudden braking and reduce speed in poor weather conditions.
Crushing Injuries	Never connect or disconnect a towbar while the tug is moving.
Structural Impact	Wing walkers must focus solely on wingtip clearance and obstacle monitoring.
Steering System Damage	Ensure steering bypass procedures are correctly completed before movement.

Final Safety Reminder

Every successful towing operation depends on discipline, communication, and attention to detail. No movement is ever "routine" when personnel safety and aircraft protection are involved.

Remember:

"Slow is smooth, smooth is safe, and safe operations protect people, aircraft, and our company."

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Silence is a Hazard Safety Word Search

ANSWERS

T E D U M H Z J G X M G Q I T D H Y W H R J C E
W X B W U A R C U A E N P R T X W T D O A D F W
O O A R K O R K F T E F W A I C P G D F T E I
W V H Z V G S S A N J Y R O M O T H Y Z W
D H Z C C M M R H K S N I O K I Q W C P Y X B A
Y R F A F V X F A T C S Y H S A F R J G T S Y
Z I Z R G C S X F L L J D I T E E L F D E U
O Q T U Q R C K M F A L Y C P C L R H T P R W
I V S C I D A Y N N K Z I R H E L C S E S V C
D T D C N K T H G O E V E N D R R W A W A H A F
N N B A F P L C B W M C O O P K D P T C N T H
F S X J O E S H T I A L H O W U B P O C A W I Z
K L I H X D R O O N P E D M A O N V M J A O B
C S A I N Y A I L N G X J D C P T T M F N V N C
L Y O A J T K Y F R E I O G G C L W Z H I Y S G
G T H A G H M G I O T L G S M U H P D N L K
Q Z J E D E G I J N C T I A G W E R A F D T F C
L J U G S A P X K Q I A R O N W N N J N Z A R I
Y D F M R E R H D H S T T F R C W W T N C I E N
X Y E N T X M D K Y K M R I H G B C G U R E F J
A H X O H O H M M R A Q Y O O Q O G J X R I F J
O U W Z G Z J Q O E H R L L P N U E D H M F T J
D E Y O J L C R U L K S H C Q E O L H G G E J F
S M S W T G M S F J Z F L Q N P B Y D R C D J X