ACCIDENTS AND THE SAFETY RECORD

According to the figures that we have received from the FAA and the CAB, general aviation suffered 5,425 accidents in 1966. An accident is counted as such when damage to the aircraft is over $300. Quite often, the so-called "accident" is nothing more than a minor mishap quite like minor auto accidents resulting in bent fenders and the like. Of the total number of accidents, 538 of these resulted in fatalities, killing a total of 1,069 people, which includes passenger and crew fatalities. We mention the latter because the general aviation fatality record often is compared to air carrier passenger fatalities, without counting air carrier crews or other persons.

The total general aviation accident *rate* for 1966 was 25.5 per 100,000 flying hours. This is the best record to date and compares with 1965 at 31.4, 1964 at 32.2, 1963 at 31.0 and 1951 at 45.2. Fatalities for 1966 in general aviation reached an all-time low of 5.085 per 100,000 flying hours and was lower than the 5.323 of the U.S. scheduled airlines. Annex C details the record back to 1950.

PILOT TRAINING AND PROFICIENCY

Private pilots are quite often the subject of criticism because they do not have the proficiency and knowledge of the professional pilots who man the airlines and the large corporate and business airplanes. However, professional pilots are not born or produced fully experienced by some magic process. They all start as student pilots and progress through the private pilot stage while learning the professional skills that will enable them to make a living as a paid pilot. Last year, the FAA issued approximately 128,000 new student certificates. While there are many dropouts along the way to achieving the necessary training and passing the FAA written and flight examinations, many of these students eventually will be released by their instructors and become private pilots. Recognizing that many private pilots, and even some commercial pilots, may have been flying for some time since they last brushed up on their technique, AOPA has developed a series of upgrade training courses and has sponsored flight training or refresher clinics around the nation for the past several years. These clinics are manned by some of the nation's finest flight instructors, including some airline captains who have maintained their instructing proficiency. To date, more than 18,000 pilots have been through the various flight and ground school courses of these clinics.

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

The AOPA staff has a number of safety programs under study, some of which have been informally discussed with the various FAA staff echelons, while other recommendations had been formally proposed to the various responsible agencies over the years. Last week, on August 23, 1967, we sent a letter to General McKee, the FAA Administrator, urging action on a number of these items. I will briefly review them here for you.

AVOIDANCE OF COLLISION

The recent collisions at Urbana and Hendersonville have focused attention on the midair collision problem. Over the years, there have been a number of collisions between various combinations of airline, military and general aviation aircraft. These last two collisions have brought undue emphasis on the general aviation-airline type of collisions, although past history will show that this type of collision has not been particularly disastrous to the airlines with respect to passenger fatalities. The most disastrous collisions have been between the airlines themselves. For example, the Grand Canyon and the New York collisions between TWA and United killed more people in each case than the last two collisions combined. A recap of the midair collisions back to 1955 is contained in Annex D.

The present trend of design and manufacture of airplanes for the airlines is toward "jumbo" and "stretched" jets that will hold up to 500 passengers. With this kind of a human cargo, it is obvious that the airlines, above all, must take additional steps to protect themselves from each other. General aviation also has a grave concern with the matter of avoiding collision, primarily from the viewpoint of self-preservation. We worry about being hit from the rear or in some other blind spot by one of these giant jets in which the pilots are pre-