

State and Local

A&M prof tests old concept

Propeller power explored

By BECKY BARRET
Reporter

Rising jet fuel costs are causing the aviation industry to take a new look at an old concept — airplanes powered by propellers.

Newly designed counterrotating propellers, shown to be more fuel efficient and almost as powerful as jet engines, could replace standard jet engines within eight to 10 years, says Dr. Kenneth Korkan, a Texas A&M aerospace engineering professor.

"We have taken the concept of the traditional propeller with two blades and have expanded it to include two propellers with six blades," Korkan says. "The two propellers moving in opposite directions capture energy normally lost in single propellers moving in one direction."

The eventual use of these propellers by airlines will lower fuel costs by one-third, thus reducing passenger cost significantly, Korkan says.

Although counterrotating propellers have been used extensively by the Soviets for 30 years, it was not until three years ago that the air industry in the United States took a renewed interest in the system, he says.

Since then, A&M has received several grants from companies for research and testing of the counterrotating propeller system.

Although airplanes with counterrotating propellers cannot expect to go as fast as a 747 or other large jets, they can match the speed of smaller jets and are able to climb and descend faster, possibly reducing travel time, Korkan says.

The propellers are made of various fiber composites, making them thinner and lighter than wood or metal.

Korkan, along with graduate students John Gazzaniga and Javier Camba, is primarily involved in propeller performance, noise reduction and de-icing procedures.



A model propeller testing rig designed and built by Gazzaniga and former student Carl Cornell is used in many of the experiments. The model rig was the first of its kind in the country and took the students only seven months to construct.

Because there are only a few propeller models in the country, Korkan says the rig would cost \$300,000 in the open market.

By placing the rig in a carefully created acoustic environment, tests can be done to reduce the sound levels, he says.

"The theory involved in counterrotating propellers is very challenging," Korkan says, "but the experimentation can be very dangerous due to the high speed of the blades."

The future use of redesigned

propellers for aircrafts has generated international interest, with the French, British and Japanese conducting their own experiments.

Major companies, such as General Electric Co., Boeing Co. and Lockheed Aircraft Corp. also are testing counterrotating propellers.

"Some people may not trust the propeller powered airplanes at first, but the reduction in cost of air travel should speed acceptance," Korkan says.

Planes with counterrotating propellers have been experimented with before in the United States, Korkan says, but they were dismissed due to high noise levels and an extremely complicated gear box that needed frequent replacing.

Seat belt law may decrease insurance rates

Associated Press

AUSTIN — The State Board of Insurance looked for help Thursday in trying to figure out what the mandatory seat belt law means to auto insurance rates.

Board members heard testimony on its staff recommendation for an average 1.3 percent statewide decrease in those rates. Part of the decrease is due to the new seat belt law.

As a result of a law approved this year, Texans riding in the front seat of vehicles must wear seat belts. State officials expect the law to greatly reduce deaths and injuries in wrecks.

Gaylon Daniel, the board's staff actuary, said his recommendation includes a projected 15 percent cut in losses to insurance companies as a result of the seat belt law. He said that prediction was based on 50 percent compliance with the law.

"There is not a calculation I'd say is concrete," he said in response to board members' questions. "This is a case where judgment is involved very heavily. We know not everybody will use seat belts."

In New York, records showed that seat belt usage went up to 70 percent in the first months of that state's mandatory use law, according to Daniel. However, in later months, usage dropped to 57 percent, he said.

While the seat belt law could mean lower rates, a recent Texas Supreme Court ruling could counteract some of that decrease. The staff recommendation takes into account the high court ruling that a person who wins a personal injury lawsuit — such as that can arise from a car wreck — can collect interest calculated back to the time of the injury.

Board Chairman Lyndon Olson said no decision had been made on whether the three-member panel would rule on the auto rates Thursday.

The staff recommendation would mean an overall cut of \$35 million in premiums next year. Actual premiums vary widely, based on type of coverage, hometown, drivers' age and the type of car.

The insurance industry pushed Thursday for a 10.6 percent average increase, a total of \$288 million.

GSS planning to reach more people

By JUNE PANG
Staff Writer

Last year Texas A&M's Gay Student Services was embroiled in a publicized fight for official recognition on campus. But this year, President Marco Roberts says, GSS is planning to make a bigger effort to reach more people since the organization has more money and access to University facilities.

"We'll operate pretty much as other organizations on campus," Roberts said. "We want to get more attention."

Roberts said he is aware of the hostility of some students and the University toward gays.

"We are trying to foster an atmosphere of cooperation," he said. "We're not going to unnecessarily criticize. I always want to cooperate with the University."

"We are trying through forums and bureaus to let them know what we are all about — distribute information of what we're doing."

The organization's eight years court battle started almost by accident.

Back in 1976, three men and

three women responded to an advertisement in The Battalion about a national gay organization. They met on campus only to find that the advertisement was a joke. Prodded by this false advertisement, they decided to start an organization themselves.

They tried to put fliers on campus and the fliers were torn up. When they tried to get permission to post fliers on campus bulletin boards to advertise their meetings, their request was rejected because they were not recognized by the University.

"At that time, we didn't want to be recognized," said Marco Roberts, current president of GSS. "We just wanted to put up fliers."

In order to get the right to post fliers, the GSS applied for recognition.

In February 1977, they filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court. The case went back and forth between District Court, Circuit Court and the Supreme Court. The District Court ruled in favor of the GSS.

Finally, in June 1985, the Supreme Court refused to hear the case. The University was forced to recognize the group.

Over the long years of the lawsuit, Texas Human Rights Foundation was the main supporter of the GSS,

said Roberts.

The case actually was tried only once — in U.S. District Court in 1982 — although the appeal process took more time.

According to Thomas Coleman, the president of Texas Human Rights Foundation, the attorneys representing GSS argued the case for free. But the University paid GSS's legal fees since it lost the case. It is not known exactly how much GSS will get, but according to Roberts, it is "definitely in the thousands."

"There's certainly a lot of respect toward them," said Roberts about the founders of GSS. "There were a lot more difficulties then than now."

GSS includes several committees which provide specific services to gays and heterosexuals in the community. The services include:

- Gayline, a telephone service providing information, peer counseling and referrals for gays.
- Forum, invites speakers to talk about gay-related issues. This semester GSS plans to have three speakers.
- Speakers' Bureau, a service for heterosexuals which provides speakers for interested groups and classes to aid in the discussion of gay issues.

Correction

A Safeway spokesperson says the wrong information was given to a Battalion reporter for an article on Safeway's Touch-n-Save shopping machine. The article, published in Tuesday's Battalion, incorrectly stated that customers who purchase \$29 worth of groceries will receive a coupon for \$5 off free groceries.

The article should have read: Customers who purchase \$29 worth of Touch-n-Save merchandise will receive a coupon for \$5 off free groceries.

Also, the double-your-money-back guarantee mentioned in the article is actually a guarantee that if, within 30 days of a purchase, a Touch-n-Save customer finds the same item he bought at Safeway at a lower price somewhere else, the customer will be refunded double the difference.

The Battalion regrets the error.

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