

Des Barker Report 2025

Airshow Safety Occurrence Review

This report does not seek to pass judgement on airshow accidents other than reporting on information in the public domain in an effort to identify and alert the airshow community worldwide, to accident trends in airshow safety, and propose methods for enhancing excellence.

Introduction

With this report, we strive to continue the legacy Des Barker left to the international airshow community. All efforts will be made to provide an annual safety occurrence review of the previous display season in the same format as the one Des was working with, including comments from the final investigation reports, without any attempt to assign blame, but rather to share potential lessons learned.

2025 Statistical Overview

Figure 1 provides the annual totals for airshow safety occurrences from 2000 to 2025, together with a trendline that highlights the long-term pattern of what can be seen as an “Airshow Accident Cycle.” Taking a holistic view, one plausible contributor to this cyclical pattern could be attributed to the broader socio-economic environment: when global GDP is strong, more shows are organised, more new forms of aerial entertainment are introduced, and exposure time increases, leading to more opportunities for things to go wrong.

Against this backdrop, the message for the international airshow community is clear: we need to act now to prevent this renewed rise from becoming the new normal. That does not mean tightening competence requirements, but rather reaffirming the *build-margin-for-error* mindset, and revisiting how manoeuvres

towards the crowd, and separation standards are addressed during the risk management process, particularly across Europe, where discussions on reapproaching crowd-related rules are already underway. At the same time, a push for regulatory harmonisation in Europe should be seen not as a constraint but as an opportunity for deeper collaboration, higher common standards, and a level of standardisation comparable to that achieved in other EASA-regulated flight operations.

On a positive note, and in continuity with Des Barker’s seminal work, the *Airshow Safety and Excellence Database app (Red)* and *GPT (Green)* have now been launched and are accessible to the airshow community via the QR codes shown below, providing a living repository of statistical data from airshow safety occurrences, and a support to data-driven analysis of air show-related hazards and risks.

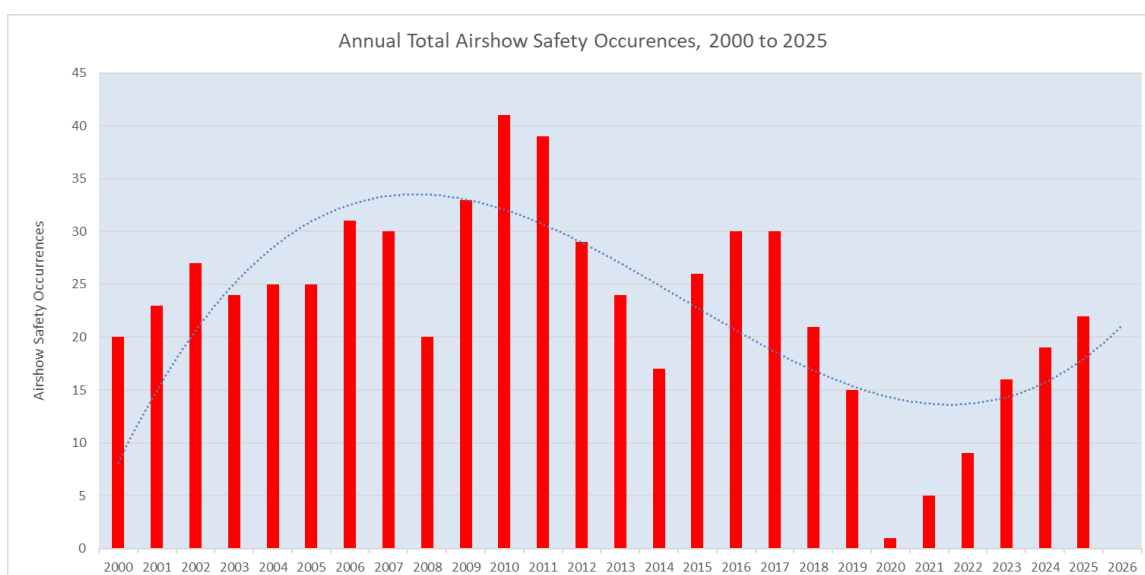
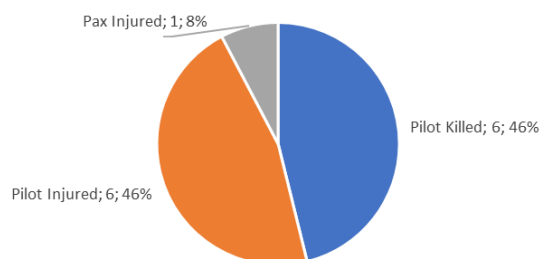


Figure 1, Airshow Safety Occurrences, Period 2000 to 2025 with Trendline

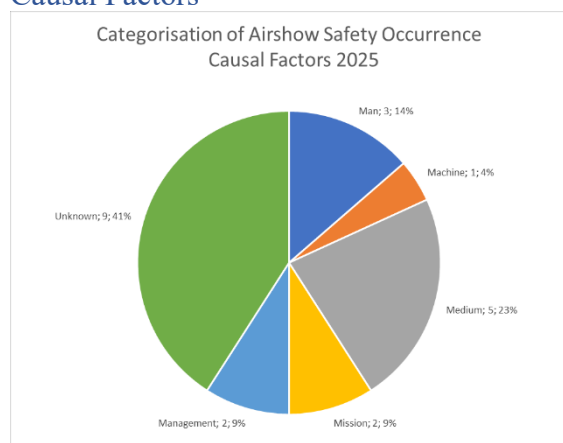
Casualties

Categorisation of Airshow Safety Occurrence
Casualties 2025



In 2025, pilot-related outcomes were evenly split between fatalities and injuries, with 6 pilots killed and 6 injured, each group representing 46% of all identified casualties, as shown in the updated pie chart. Only one passenger injury was recorded (8%), and there were no reported public fatalities or mass-casualty events comparable to the 2024 Koshi Airshow disaster. Five successful ejections were recorded, saving the pilots' lives. Collectively, these figures suggest some improvement in protecting spectators and non-performers; however, they also stress that pilots remain the most exposed group in airshow operations, and that further work is needed on egress decision-making, display windows discipline, and organizational pressures if the community is to honour Des Barker's warning that fatal accidents are operationally and commercially untenable.

Causal Factors

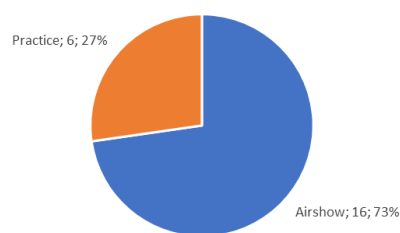


In 2025, the 5M framework again underpins the categorisation of causal factors, with an additional *Unknown* category retained because most investigations remain at a preliminary stage and definitive causes have not yet been

published. *Medium* (the operating environment) emerged as the leading factor, associated with 5 events (23%), including issues such as bird activity at coastal venues, runway/ground defects, and challenging topography near display axes. *huMan*-related factors were identified in 3 occurrences (14%), typically involving low-altitude energy management, display-profile deviation, or decision-making around recovery heights and ejection timing. *Machine* and *Management* each featured in a single and two cases (4% and 9% respectively), reflecting isolated technical failures and organisational or oversight shortcomings, while *Mission*-related elements—increasing complexity of multi-ship and eVTOL demonstrations—accounted for another 9% of the dataset. Most striking, however, is that 9 of the 22 occurrences (41%) currently sit in the *Unknown* category, underscoring how much of the underlying risk picture may still involve unrecognised or multi-factor contributions; as final reports emerge, it is likely that a proportion of these will map back to *huMan* performance and latent organisational influences rather than purely environmental or mechanical causes.

Event Categories

Categorisation of Airshow Safety Occurrence
Event Categories 2025

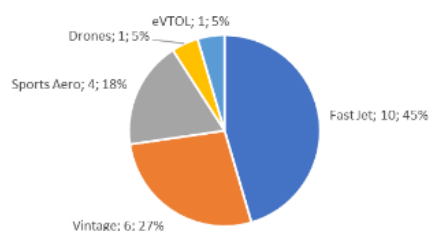


In 2025, most occurrences again took place during the public displays themselves, with 16 events (73%) happening in front of an audience and 6 (27%) during practice or work-up sorties, as depicted in the chart. As in previous years, these figures represent only occurrences that reached the open domain through media or social media reporting; events during rehearsals in controlled areas with no spectators or cameras are likely underrepresented, so the true proportion of practice-related close calls may be higher than shown. This reinforces the long-standing principle to “*train as you display and display as you train*”: airshow pilots and

FDDs should build realistic external stressors—public presence, media coverage, time pressure, sponsor expectations—into their preparation, even via scenario-based or table-top exercises, so that the transition from practice to live display does not introduce novel psychological loads at the most safety-critical moment.

Aircraft Categories

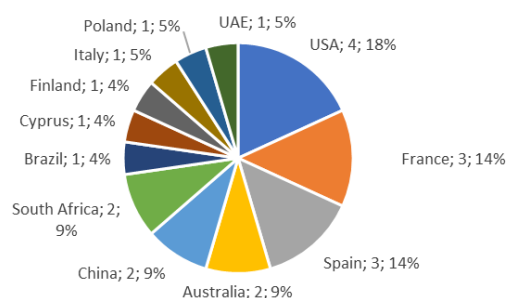
Categorisation of Airshow Safety Occurrence
Vehicle/Aircraft Category 2025



In 2025, fast jets remained the most represented platform category in reported airshow occurrences, accounting for 10 events (45%), as indicated in the chart. Vintage aircraft followed with 6 events (27%), while sports aerobatic and light utility types accounted for 4 events (18%), together confirming that conventional crewed platforms still dominate the risk picture in display flying. Drones appeared in a single recorded occurrence (5%), and eVTOL or novel demonstrator aircraft in another (5%), suggesting that although these emerging technologies are increasingly present at shows, their visible incident rate in open-source reporting remains relatively low, although this may partly reflect under-reporting of small-scale drone malfunctions outside Western media markets.

Accidents by Country

Categorisation of Airshow Safety Occurrence
Country 2025



In 2025, the global distribution of reported airshow occurrences again underlined the

international nature of the display-flying circuit, with the USA accounting for the largest share at 4 events (18%), followed by France and Spain with 3 each (14% apiece), as shown in the chart. Australia, China, and South Africa each recorded 2 occurrences (9%), while Brazil, Cyprus, Finland, Italy, Poland, and the UAE reported single events (4–5% each), reinforcing that exposure is spread across both mature and emerging airshow markets.

At a regional level, Europe continued to register the highest number of occurrences, ahead of North America and the Asia-Pacific region, suggesting that any future harmonisation of display standards will require strong European leadership, with active participation from all countries, if systemic lessons are to be effectively captured and disseminated.

Airshow Safety Performance Indicators (ASPIs)



Barker Airshow Accident Rate (BAAR)

The graph above shows that in 2025, the Barker Airshow Accident Rate (BAAR) rose to **2.78** accidents per 10,000 aerial events, indicating a higher overall frequency of reportable occurrences compared with 2024.

Airshow Fatality Rate (AFR) and Airshow Casualty Rate (ACR)

In 2025, the Airshow Fatality Rate (AFR)—the number of deaths relative to the number of airshow events—fell markedly to **0.76** fatalities per 10,000 events, breaking the post-pandemic upward trend evident in previous years (see *Figure 2*). The Airshow Casualty Rate (ACR), also decreased to **0.89** casualties per 10,000 events, representing a substantial reduction from 2024. This simultaneous drop in AFR and ACR suggests that, while occurrences still happen and require close monitoring, the international airshow community has made tangible progress in limiting the human consequences of accidents for pilots, crews, spectators, and the public. Nevertheless, there

is room for improvement in the risk management process, considering the considerations for maneuvers towards the crowd (MTC). Use the QR code below to access the *Debris Trajectory app*.



International ASPIs: Regional Comparison



In 2025, the regional comparison of Airshow SPIs shows a more nuanced picture, with safety performance varying significantly between North America, Europe, and the rest of the world.

The BAAR is lowest in North America at **1.03** accidents per 10,000 events, rises to **3.25** in Europe, and peaks at **8.47** in the rest of the world, indicating that accident frequency remains disproportionately higher outside the traditional North American and European airshow markets.

For the AFR, North America records *no* fatalities, while Europe stands at **0.65** and the rest of the world at **4.23** fatalities per 10,000 events, implying a stark regional gap in fatal-accident outcomes

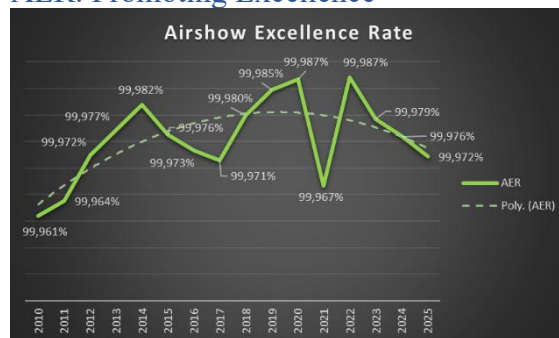
The ACR follows a similar pattern, with **0.51** casualties per 10,000 events in North America, **0.98** in Europe, and **2.12** in the rest of the world, suggesting that both fatal and non-fatal harms are concentrated disproportionately in regions with less mature or unevenly enforced display-safety frameworks.

These differences reinforce the need for intensified cross-regional collaboration, the promotion of proven North American and European best practices, and the development of commonly accepted global standards if the

airshow community aims to reduce accident, fatality, and casualty rates worldwide rather than only within its most regulated regions. It is important to recognize that any airshow-related safety incident that reaches the media significantly affects the airshow industry as a whole.

Airshow Excellence Rate (AER)

AER: Promoting Excellence



In 2025, the Airshow Excellence Rate (AER) was 99.972%, a marginal decrease from 2024 that nonetheless continues to reflect an exceptionally high standard of safety performance across global airshows. However, the trend line in the graph shows a gentle downward trajectory over recent years, indicating that—even from this very high baseline—the international airshow community cannot assume excellence is self-sustaining and must continue investing in proactive safety management and learning from rare but high-impact safety occurrences.

Regional Comparison for AERs



In 2025, the regional comparison of the Airshow Excellence Rate (AER) again shows uniformly high performance, with only marginal differences between regions.

- North America records the highest AER at **99.990%**, indicating that virtually all airshow events conclude without any reportable safety occurrence.
- Europe follows closely with an AER of **99.967%**, reflecting a similarly robust

safety culture despite a slightly higher proportion of incidents compared with North America.

- The rest of the world posts an AER of 99.915%, still extremely high, but marginally lower than the other regions, which may point to variations in regulatory maturity, infrastructure, or reporting practices.

Overall, these figures confirm that airshows across all regions operate at an exceptionally high level of excellence, while also highlighting the value of continued cross-regional exchange of training methods, regulatory best practices, and safety-management approaches to close the remaining gaps.

How Excellent Were Airshows in 2025? Strong Excellence, Emerging Warning Signs.

In 2025, the global AER slipped marginally to 99.972%, extending the gentle downward trend of recent years and signalling that excellence, although still very high, cannot be assumed to be self-sustaining. Against this backdrop, the performance of North America stands out: with an AER of 99.990%, a BAAR of 1.03, an AFR of 0.00, and an ACR of 0.51 per 10,000 events, the region is approaching the aspirational “ultimate numbers” for all four indicators—minimal accidents, zero fatalities, very low casualty rates, and near-flawless overall event outcomes.

Such levels of measured excellence must be used as a benchmark for other regions, however, they should not encourage complacency or overconfidence, either from individual performers or from Flying Display Directors (FDDs) and Event Organisers (EOs); planning, validation, and supervision should continue to tolerate no avoidable risk. Aviation authorities should maintain close, constructive engagement with FDDs, EOs, and display pilots—combining trust with rigorous review of plans, execution, and regulatory frameworks—so that other regions can progressively close the gap with North America and move the global community closer to an AER near 99.99%, an AFR of zero, and a BAAR below 1.

Airshow Safety Occurrences Overview 2025

1. [16 February 2025, A-20G \(TX, USA\)](#)



Figure 2, A-20G, USA (Credit: KGNS)

On 16 February 2025, at about 12:39 CST, Douglas A-20G Havoc N747HS was substantially damaged during an airshow flight at Laredo, Texas, and the pilot sustained serious injuries. The flight was conducted under 14 CFR Part 91 for an air display, and the preliminary investigation indicates a contributing factor related to a powerplant system or component failure/malfunction.

2. [16 February 2025, Impala MB326 \(Saldhana, South Africa\)](#)



Figure 3, Impala, South Africa (Credit: Gunnar Oberhösel)

During the West Coast Saldanha Airshow at Saldanha/Vredenburg Municipal Airport (FASD), Atlas Impala Mk I (MB.326M) ZU-IMP crashed and burst into flames, destroying the aircraft and fatally injuring the pilot. According to witness accounts and the preliminary investigation, the aircraft was performing a “dirty” slow aileron roll with landing gear and flaps extended when, at the top of the manoeuvre, the nose dropped toward the ground, the engine sound decreased, and by the time the jet rolled back towards level flight it had lost substantial altitude; the engine then

spooled up again, the right wing struck the ground, and a post-impact fire developed almost immediately.

3. [25 March 2025, Alpha Jet \(Saint Dizier Air Force Base, France\)](#)



Figure 4, Patrouille de France, France (Credit: PTV)

During an aerobatic training sortie near Saint-Dizier Air Base (LFSI/BA113), two Armée de l'Air et de l'Espace Dassault/Dornier Alpha Jet E aircraft of the Patrouille de France team collided mid-air, destroying both jets; all three crew members (two pilots and one passenger) ejected successfully and were recovered alive with only minor injuries. One wreck came down on a concrete silo at a nearby industrial site, sparking a fire, while the other crashed into a nearby canal or swampy wooded area just beyond it, according to local officials.

4. [28 March 2025, Pitts S-1-11X \(Avalon Airport, Australia\)](#)



Figure 5, Pitts S-1, Australia (Credit: 7News)

During the Australian International Airshow at Avalon Airport (AVV/YMAV), Victoria, Wolf Pitts S-1-11X VH-PVX crashed during an aerobatic display, seriously injuring the pilot and completely destroying the aircraft. The Sky Aces formation team of four Pitts-type aircraft, operated by Paul Bennet Airshows, had just completed several formation manoeuvres when VH-PVX detached for a planned solo sequence;

at about 17:17 local time, the pilot initiated a “triple avalanche” (a looping manoeuvre with three snap rolls at the top) from a lower-than-usual entry altitude, and although the snap rolls were completed and the aircraft briefly stabilised while inverted, the subsequent descent could not be arrested in time and the aircraft impacted terrain.

5. [6 April 2025, TB-25N \(Lakeland, FL, USA\)](#)



Figure 6, TB-25N, USA (Credit: @B-25 Panchito; Facebook Account)

On 6 April 2025, at about 18:10 local time, North American TB-25N Mitchell N9079Z, operated by RAG Wings & Radials Aircraft, struck a buzzard during an airshow display near Lakeland Linder International Airport, Florida. The World War II-era bomber, flying a local demonstration sortie from Lakeland Linder Regional Airport, sustained only minor damage, and there were no injuries.

6. [30 April 2025, F-4 Phantom \(Kyrenia, Cyprus\)](#)



Figure 7, F-4, Cyprus (Credit: @suleymanunal68)

During a Teknofest 2025 rehearsal in Cyprus, a Turkish Air Force F-4E Phantom II executed a very low-altitude reposition toward the show center and descended so far that it appeared to brush the surface, before the pilot managed a

late recovery that “dusted off” the ground without actual impact.

7. [6 May 2025, MB-339A \(Pantelleria Airport, Italy\)](#)



Figure 8, Freccie Tricolori, Italy (Source: @theaviationist)

During the Pantelleria Airshow at Pantelleria Airport (PNL/LICG), three Aermacchi MB-339A/PAN jets of the Freccie Tricolori (Ponies 6, 8, and 9) were involved in a mid-air contact while flying a formation manoeuvre, but all three pilots carried out successful emergency recoveries with no injuries on the ground. Pony 8 departed the runway during its landing roll and sustained substantial damage, while Ponies 6 (MM54477) and 9 (MM55059) landed safely but were found to have significant tail damage.

8. [7 May 2025, F-18 Hornet \(Rovaniemi Airport, Finland\)](#)



Figure 9, F-18, Finland (Credit: Finnish AF)

On 7 May 2025, Finnish Air Force F/A-18C Hornet HN-409 crashed on the edge of the runway area at Rovaniemi Airport during a solo display practice, coming to rest at the corner of the base’s construction site and being destroyed by impact and post-crash fire. The pilot ejected safely, and no people or infrastructure on the ground suffered more than very minor damage.

9. [18 May 2025, RV-8 \(Afonso AFB, Brazil\)](#)



Figure 10, RV-8, Brazil (Source: CNN Brazil)

On 18 May 2025, experimental Van’s RV-8 PP-XCW, a kit-built aircraft, was performing aerobatic manoeuvres during an airshow at Afonso Air Force Base (SBAF), Rio de Janeiro, when it impacted the ground and slid along the surface for several metres before stopping. The pilot was able to exit uninjured and walk away, but the aircraft sustained substantial structural damage.

10. [30 May 2025, Spitfire \(Biscarrosse/Parentis Airport \(LFBS\), France\)](#)



Figure 11, Spitfire, France (Source: @asn.flightsafety)

At Biscarrosse/Parentis Airport (LFBS), Supermarine Spitfire FR Mk XIVe “RM927 / X”, registered F-AYXX and operated by W Air Collection, suffered a propeller strike and tipped onto its nose while taxiing after landing, following contact with an unmarked soft ground area and buried concrete/drainage structure near the runway edge. The pilot was uninjured, and the owner reported only minor damage with plans to repair the aircraft and return it to flight within weeks, while an official investigation into the inadequate post-construction inspection and lack of hazard marking was opened.

11. [6 June 2025, MS.733 Alcyon \(Rochefort, France\)](#)



Figure 12, MS.733, France (Credit: © Aucun(e) - © Emmaüs Rochefort Saint-Agnant)

On 6 June 2025, privately operated Morane-Saulnier MS.733 Alcyon F-AZXU crashed in a field near Rochefort Saint-Agnant Airport (RCO/LFDN) during a demonstration flight associated with an air-show event, after the pilot lost control in a left turn at low altitude. The aircraft was destroyed and the pilot—an experienced former Armée de l’Air et de l’Espace officer—was fatally injured, though no people or property on the ground were affected.

12. [15 June 2025, Eurofighter \(San Javier, Spain\)](#)



Figure 13, Eurofighter, Spain (Source: X/Pepelpgc)

At the Aire25 airshow over San Javier, Murcia, a Spanish Air Force Eurofighter EF2000 (C.16-25) from Ala 11 suffered a high-speed bird strike to the front/right side of the canopy while performing a high-speed pass. The pilot immediately aborted the routine and returned to Murcia–San Javier Airport, where the jet landed safely, with only canopy damage and minor associated damage, and no injuries.

13. [15 June 2025, MB-339 \(San Javier, Spain\)](#)



Figure 14, Frece Tricolori, Spain (Source: @asn.flightsafety)

During the Aire25 airshow at San Javier, a Frece Tricolori Aermacchi MB-339PAN reportedly experienced a minor bird strike while flying its display sequence, but the event was uneventful, with no damage, no injuries, and the team continuing operations as planned.

14. [12 July 2025, GB1 Gamebird \(Gould Peterson MO, USA\)](#)



Figure 15, GB1, USA (Source: NTSB)

On 12 July 2025, at about 08:30 CDT, Game Composites GB-1 GameBird N588AF was substantially damaged and Van's RV-8 N931KZ sustained minor damage in a runway-incursion type collision near Gould Peterson Municipal Airport (K57), Tarkio, Missouri; neither pilot was injured and both aircraft were operating as Part 91 personal flights during the Wing Nuts Flying Circus event, which featured a temporary tower and local TFR for airshow activities. N588AF, leading a five-ship formation, initiated a go-around from base-to-final after being instructed by another formation pilot, but still overflew and struck the RV-8, already rolling out on runway 36, the GameBird's rudder contacting and being partially severed by the RV-8's propeller.

15. 27 July 2025, EF-18 Hornet (Gijon, Spain)



Figure 16, F-18, Spain (Source: @turnandburnapparel)

During the Gijón Air Festival over San Lorenzo Beach, a Spanish Air Force EF-18 Hornet performing a low-altitude display executed an abrupt evasive roll and descent to avoid a flock of birds that suddenly appeared in its flight path, bringing the jet extremely close to the sea surface before it climbed away. The pilot recovered safely, there was no contact with the

birds or the water, and although the dramatic manoeuvre prompted termination of the display and public concern, the Air and Space Force later confirmed it was a standard emergency response that prevented a potential bird-strike accident—highlighting the protective value of maintaining *altitude and energy margins* in low-level display flying profiles.

16. 14 August 2025, Extra 300 (Durban, South Africa)

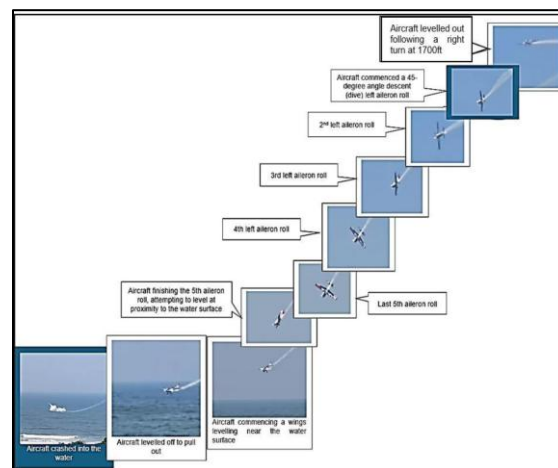


Figure 17, Extra 300, South Africa (Source: SACAA)

On 14 August 2025, Extra EA-300LP ZS-AEC crashed into the sea off Suncoast Beach, Durban, during its final aerobatic display at the airshow held to close the ICAO Next Generation of Aviation Professionals (NGAP) Global Summit, fatally injuring the pilot. According to the South African CAA preliminary report, the aircraft entered the aerobatic box in inverted low-level flight, then flew a series of climbing and turning manoeuvres over the ocean before initiating five descending left aileron rolls from about 1,700 ft AMSL—below the planned entry height—after which video evidence shows the aircraft still rolling left as it attempted to level, but continuing to descend until it struck the water.

[17. 28 August 2025, F-16 \(Radom, Poland\)](#)



Figure 18, F-16, Poland (Source: @remizacompl)

On 28 August 2025, a Polish Air Force Lockheed Martin F-16C Block 52-CF (tail 4056) from the “Tiger Demo Team” crashed on runway 07 at Radom Airport (RDO/EPRA) while rehearsing for the Radom Air Show 2025; the jet was destroyed, and its pilot, Major Maciej “Slab” Krakowian, was killed. Video and early official commentary indicate that the aircraft entered a cloverleaf manoeuvre and exited with insufficient height to complete the recovery, resulting in impact near the runway threshold.

[18. 16 September 2025, XPeng AeroHT eVTOL \(Changchun, China\)](#)



Figure 19, XPeng, China (Source: finance.sina.com.cn)

At the 2025 Changchun Air Show in Jilin Province, two XPeng AeroHT eVTOL “flying car” prototypes collided mid-air during practice for a demonstration flight, causing one aircraft to crash to the ground and catch fire while the other managed to land safely. At least one occupant suffered non-life-threatening injuries and was taken to the hospital, and no serious injuries were reported on the ground.

[19. 2 October 2025, Drones \(Liuyang, China\)](#)



Figure 20, Drones, China (Source: @gulfnnews)

On 2 October 2025 in Liuyang, Hunan Province, a National Day night fireworks–drone show suffered multiple UAV malfunctions, causing pyrotechnic charges to ignite prematurely and shower burning sparks over nearby forested areas and sections of the crowd, briefly starting small fires and triggering panic among thousands of spectators, though authorities later reported no injuries. Investigators and media attributed the incident to a technical failure in the show’s drone/pyrotechnic control system, and noted that Liuyang—China’s “fireworks capital”—has seen previous disruptive drone-display malfunctions, including an event in 2021 where out-of-control drones fell into a crowd.

[20. 21 November 2025, HAL Tejas LCA Mk1 \(Dubai, UAE\)](#)



Figure 21, Tejas, UAE (Source: Telengana)

On 21 November 2025, Indian Air Force HAL Tejas LCA Mk 1 LA-5026 crashed during an aerobatic demonstration at the Dubai Airshow at Al Maktoum International Airport (DWC), killing the demo pilot, Wing Commander Namansh Syal, and destroying the aircraft.

Video and expert analyses suggest the jet entered a rolling reposition manoeuvre at very low altitude, then descended steeply and failed to recover—likely due to a combination of factors—before impacting the terrain in a fireball.

21. [30 November 2025, RV-7 \(Wedderburn, Australia\)](#)



Figure 22, RV-7, Australia (Credit: 7NEWS)

On 30 November 2025, Van’s RV-7 VH-EWS, a privately owned and amateur-built aircraft, crashed into forested terrain near Wedderburn Airport (YWBN), New South Wales, after a mid-air collision with another RV-7 during a four-ship formation flight by the Freedom Formation Display Team; the aircraft was destroyed and the sole pilot-owner was killed, while the other RV-7 landed safely. The ATSB’s preliminary findings describe how, as the “Acro Formation” flight returned to land, two of the RV-7s came into contact in the circuit, separating the rear fuselage of VH-EWS and causing a near-vertical descent, whereas the second aircraft remained controllable and taxied off the runway without injuries.

22. [3 December 2025, F-16 \(Trona CA, USA\)](#)



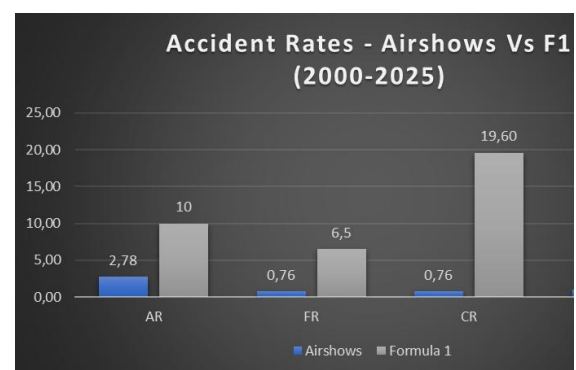
Figure 23, F-16, USA (Source: abc7chicago.com)

USAF Thunderbirds Lockheed Martin F-16CM-52-CF Fighting Falcon “Thunderbird 5” (92-3881) crashed south of Trona Airport

(TRH/L72), California, during a training mission, after the pilot, Capt. Laney “Rouge” Schol lost control and ejected safely; the jet was destroyed, and a small post-crash fire was quickly contained with no damage to surrounding vegetation or the community. The pilot sustained non-life-threatening injuries, returned to flying with the team within about a week, and officials have not released a formal cause.

Final Thoughts

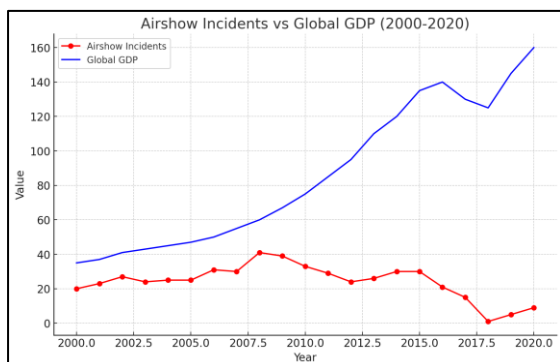
High-Performance and High-Risk Organizations Comparison (Airshow Vs Formula 1).



The Figure above offers a useful benchmark against another high-performance domain with mature safety engineering. On the rates shown, airshows perform strongly: the Accident Rate (AR) (2.78 vs 10), Fatality Rate (FR) (0.76 vs 6.5), and Casualty Rate (CR) (0.76 vs 19.60) are all materially **lower** than Formula 1 across 2000–2025.

Yet public perception is often shaped less by statistics than by the intense media focus that accompanies any airshow fatality, particularly when spectators are involved; in this respect, the airshow community can *learn* from Formula 1’s systematic approach to *spectator area design, debris fencing, run off zoning, and real-time risk modelling*, adapting those principles to three-dimensional envelopes. The goal is not to claim safety superiority, rather it is to make public protection visibly robust, consistently, even as display complexity increases.

Implied Association Between Airshow Safety Occurrences and Socio-economic Conditions

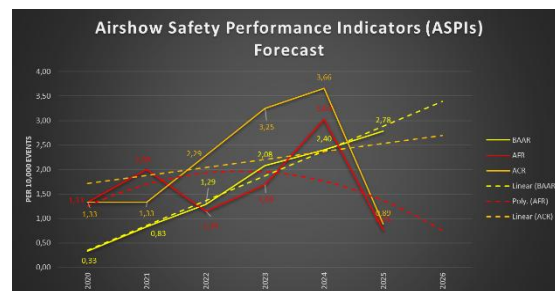


Viewed thoughtfully, the chart above suggests that airshow safety occurrences often rise during periods of stronger global economic activity, particularly across 2000–2020. This should not be read as GDP “causing” accidents. A more defensible interpretation is that economic growth tends to increase *exposure*: more events are scheduled, programmes expand, and organisers are more willing to introduce higher-complexity content. More exposure hours and operational variety naturally create more opportunities for incidents—even if baseline safety standards do not deteriorate.

This “*Airshow Accident Cycle*” may therefore be partly *volume-driven*. In boom periods, sponsorship and tourism budgets increase, and commercial pressure can encourage additional show days, tighter schedules, larger formations, or novel formats such as drone swarms combined with other flying display acts. If safety barriers, ie, competence, currency, discipline, margins, and emergency planning, do not scale at the same pace, occurrence counts can drift upward. Conversely, downturns can depress occurrence totals simply by reducing the number and scale of events—not necessarily because risk has been fundamentally reduced.

The practical implication is forward-looking: *growth years require deliberate overcompensation on risk management*. Authorities, organisers, FDDs, and performers should plan for higher tempo and higher ambition by *strengthening competence requirements, tightening margins, and stress-testing “worst credible case” scenarios*, so that increased activity does not translate into a predictable rise in occurrences.

Excellence First, Safety Always – Outlook to 2026



The 2025 season marks a mixed but *cautiously encouraging* moment for the international airshow community. Overall, ASPIs improved compared with 2024, with a lower AFR and ACR and a still-high AER, yet the BAAR remains above the aspirational threshold of 1 accident per 10,000 events. The forecast trend lines for 2026 show the BAAR and ACR flattening or gently rising if no further action is taken, while AFR is projected to decline, indicating that accidents could become less lethal but not necessarily less frequent.

These projections emphasise that the post-pandemic escalation in BAAR, AFR, and ACR has not been fully reversed and that the modest recovery seen in 2025 could easily plateau or deteriorate without sustained effort.

If the community treats the 2026 forecast as a *warning* rather than a *prediction*, there is still time to bend these lines downward—towards a future for the entire international airshow community with an AER approaching 99.99%, a BAAR consistently *below 1*, and AFR and ACR trending steadily *closer to zero*. Achieving this will require a renewed commitment to the guiding principle “*Excellence First, Safety Always*,” where every display is planned and flown as though it will define the industry’s credibility with regulators, sponsors, and, most importantly, the public.

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