FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, ALASKA FLIGHT SERVICES

Results from PIREP Questionnaire at AASF Fall Seminar 2014

Your Flight Service Stations are working toward improving the solicitation, dissemination and quality of Pilot Weather Reports in the aviation weather system.

December 2014

Background

On November 15, 2014, as part of the Alaska Flight Services Pilot Weather Report (PIREP) Improvement Initiative, a questionnaire was prepared and delivered to pilots attending the Alaska Aviation Safety Foundation (AASF) Fall Seminar in Anchorage. The non-scientific questionnaire was developed to gather an initial snapshot of pilot input on PIREPs for the Flight Service working group. This group was formed to understand better how to improve PIREP solicitation/dissemination quality, quantity and effectiveness. The Initiative was kicked off in response to stakeholder input and statistical information indicating that from 2010 to 2013, FSS PIREP productivity had decreased by over 35%. The questionnaire was also developed for potential refinement by the working group and for its consideration of whether to disseminate it more broadly for greater input and via additional methodologies such as internet.

Approximately 120 pilots attended the event. Some 60 questionnaires were distributed and 33 were completed and submitted back to the FSS representatives at the event.

Not all questions resulted in 33 responses. Some pilots made multiple responses and some did not answer certain questions. Comments associated with a particular question are appended to the question in the body of the report which follows, the remainder of the comments are rolled up at the end of the report.

Findings and Highlights

Slightly more than two thirds of the respondents indicated that they are concerned about the general availability of quality PIREPS when preparing for flight (67%).

Less than half the pilots indicated that FSS PIREP solicitation methods today are effective (44%).

Pilot generated reports on braking action or other surface conditions are very important to 67% of the respondents.

A strong majority (70%) of the pilots indicated they have made go/no go decisions based strictly on PIREPS.

Accuracy of PIREPS is a concern with 53% of the pilots stating they believe PIREPS are somewhat accurate.

Pilots overwhelmingly will provide a PIREP if asked directly (85%).

VFR air taxi minima of 500 foot ceilings and 2 miles visibility reported in a PIREP were accepted by 70% of the pilots, with 24% needing more information to decide; six per cent of the respondents rejected the report.

Absence of Mountain Pass PIREPS was reported by 41% of the pilots as a great concern.

Accuracy of forecasts (52%) and very significantly unsureness about the reporting format (28%) were given as reasons that keep pilots from providing PIREPS.

Making PIREPS during benign weather to validate forecast information and assure other pilots about conditions was concurred with by 84% of the respondents.

Sixty per cent of the pilots reported normally filing zero PIREPS on routine flights.

Pilot comments were shared willingly. Significantly, it was pointed out that all pilots don't have access to internet based weather camera information and that PIREPS remain important products for them.

FAA, Alaska Flight Services

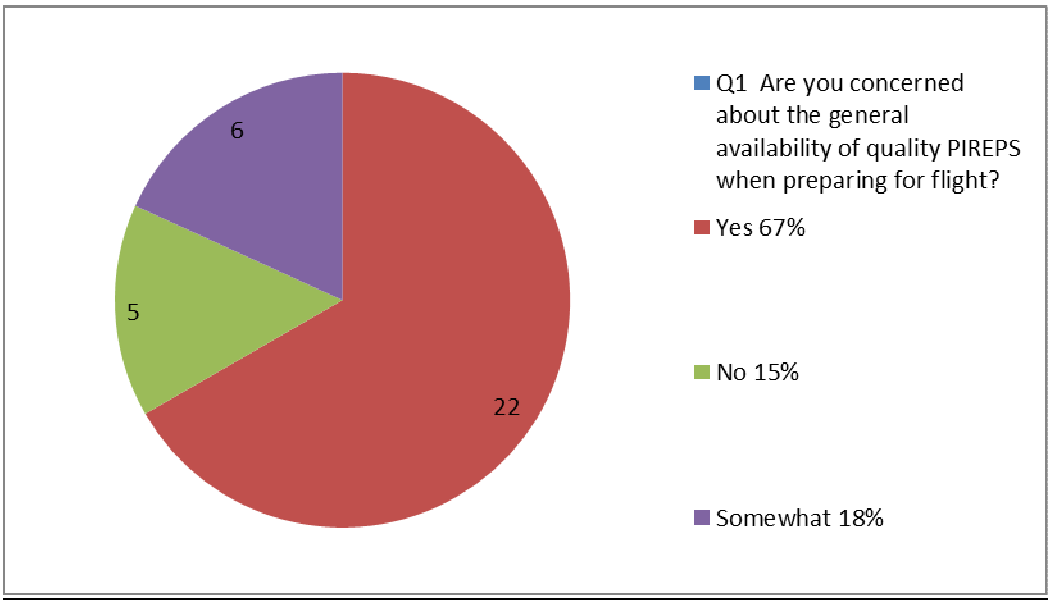
PIREP Questionnaire--AASF Winter Seminar 2014

RESULTS

Your Flight Service Stations are working toward improving the solicitation, dissemination and quality of Pilot Weather Reports in the weather system. Your input is appreciated!

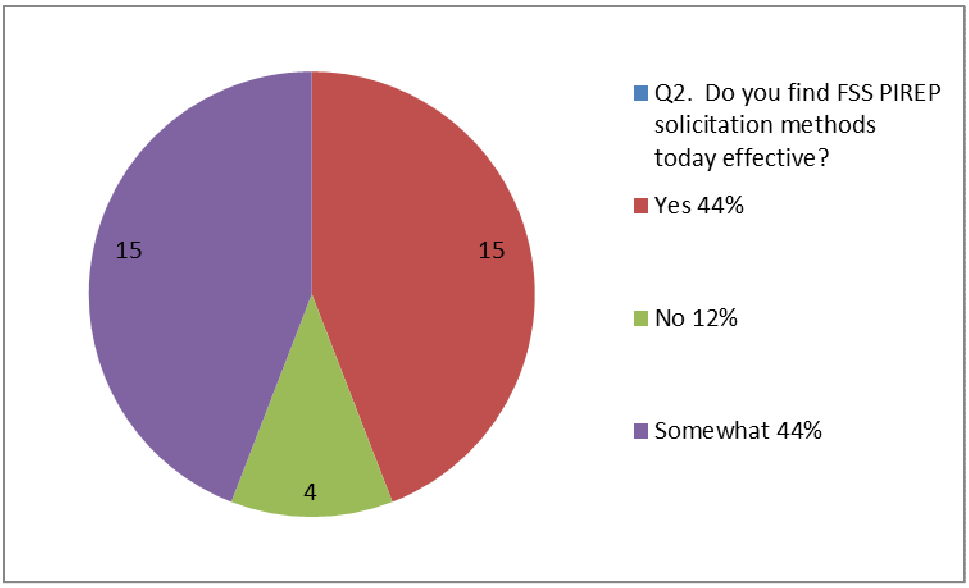
1. Are you concerned about the general availability of quality PIREPS when preparing for flight?

Circle: a. Yes **22** b. No **5** c. Somewhat **6**



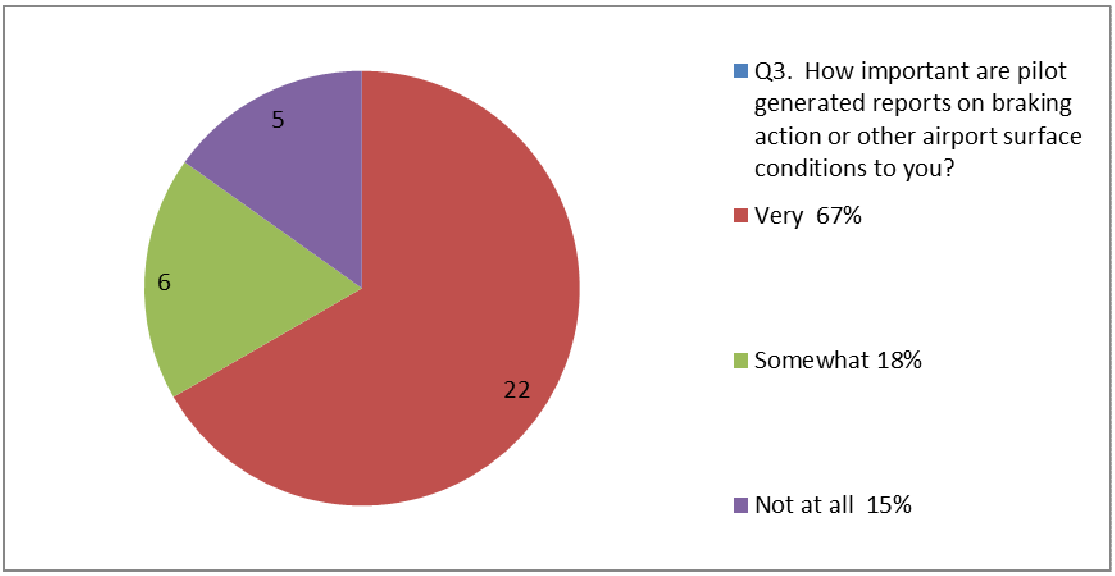
2. Do you find FSS PIREP solicitation methods today effective?

Circle: a. Yes **15** b. No **4** c. Somewhat **15**



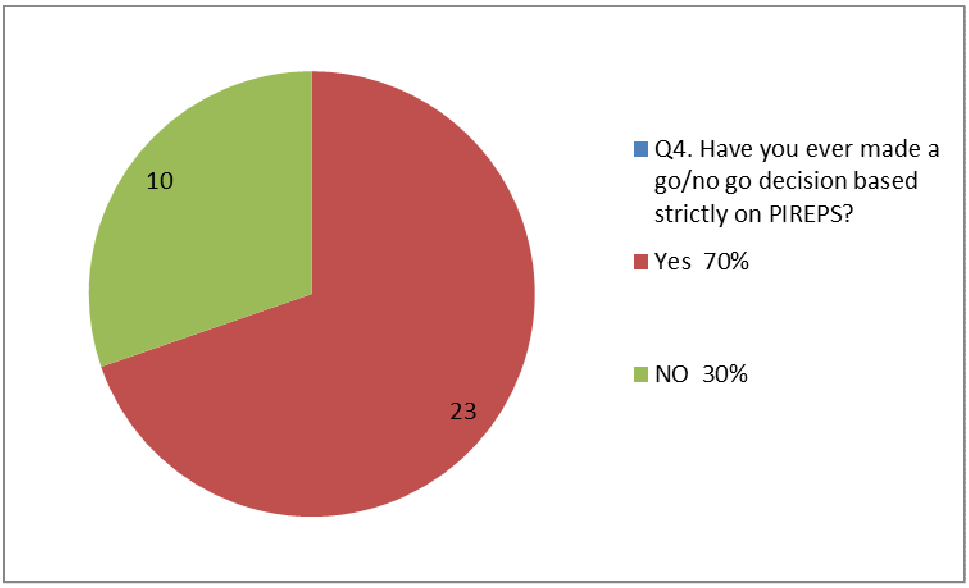
3. How important are pilot generated reports on braking action or other airport surface conditions to you?

Circle: a. Very **22** b. Somewhat **6** c. Not at all **5**



4. Have you ever made a go/no go decision based strictly on PIREPS?

Circle: a. Yes **23** b. No **10**



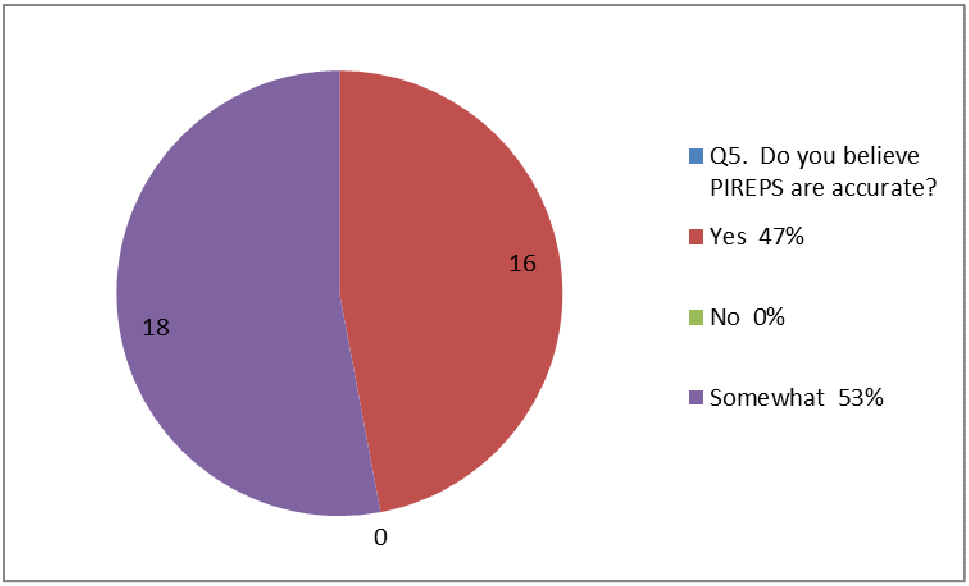
Comments: Icing, turbulence

VFR, conservative about wx would typically cancel before relying only on PIREPS

But rarely

5. Do you believe PIREPS are accurate?

Circle: a. Yes **16** b. No **0** c. Somewhat **18**



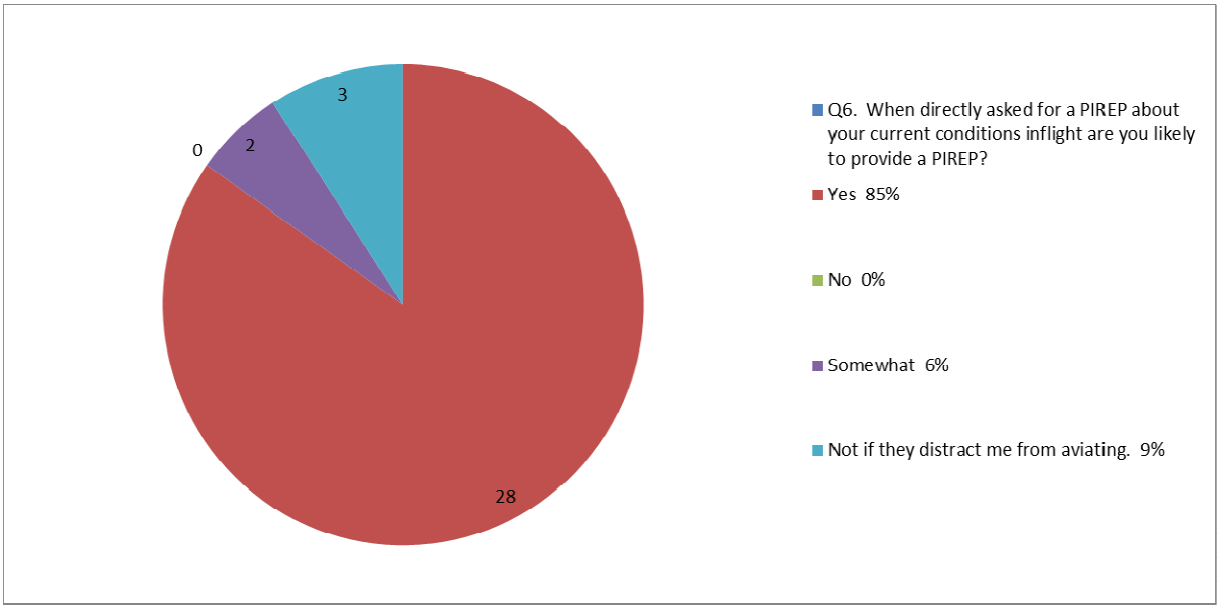
Comments: Based on Time/Location/knowing what system is doing

Usually

Depends on information provided

6. When directly asked for a PIREP about your current conditions inflight are you likely to provide a PIREP?

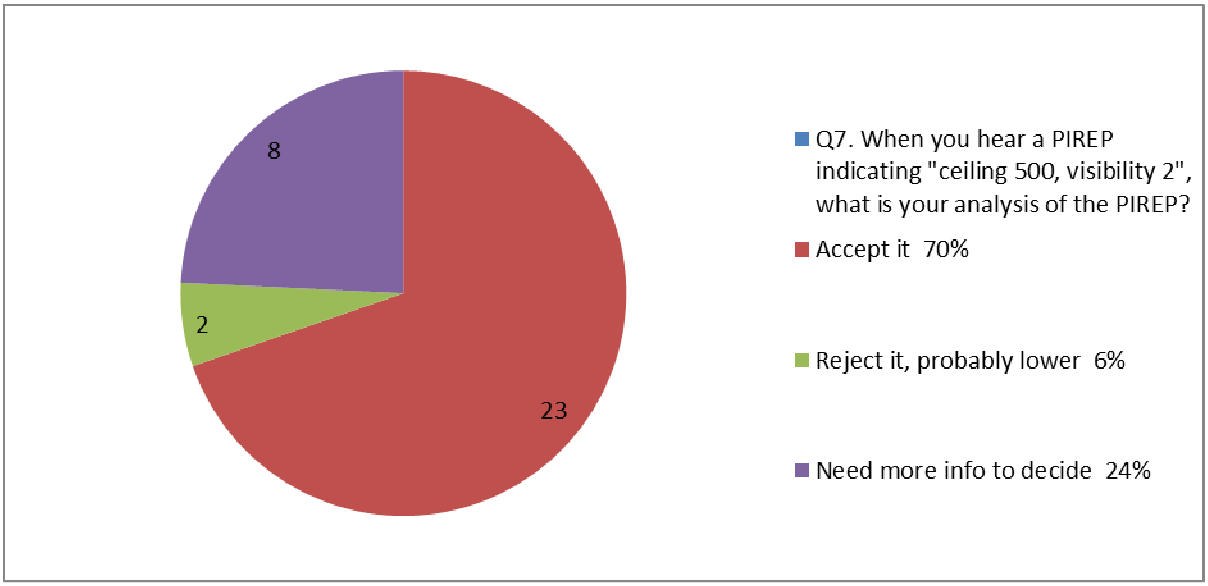
Circle: a. Yes **28** b. No **0** c. Somewhat **2** d. Not if they distract me from aviating **3**



Comment: Duh?

7. When you hear a PIREP indicating "ceiling 500, visibility 2", what is your analysis of the PIREP?

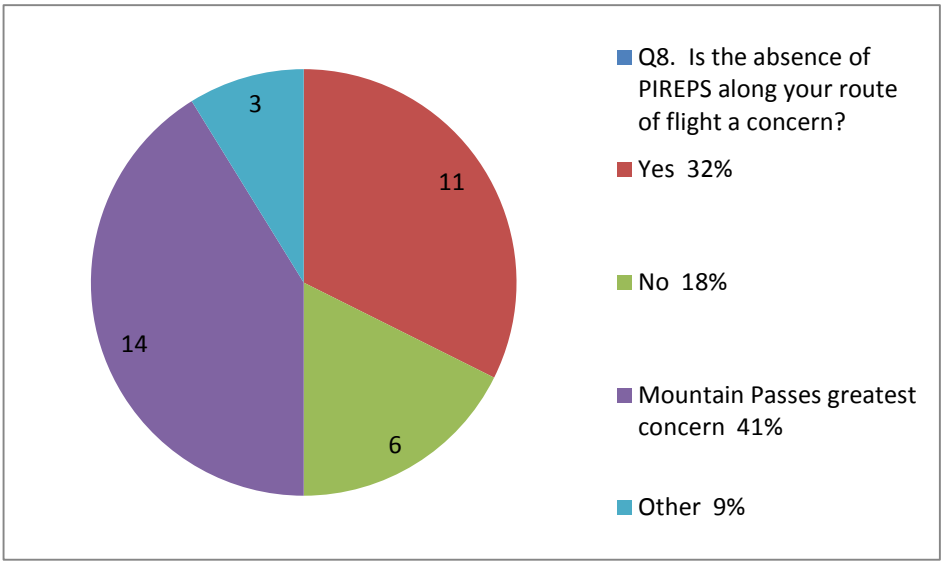
Circle: a. Accept it **23** b. Reject it, probably lower **2** c. Need more info to decide **8**



8. Is the absence of PIREPS along your route of flight a concern?

Circle: a. Yes **11** b. No **6** c. Mountain Passes are my greatest concern **14**

d. Other **3** _____



Comments: Depends on general conditions

Not usually

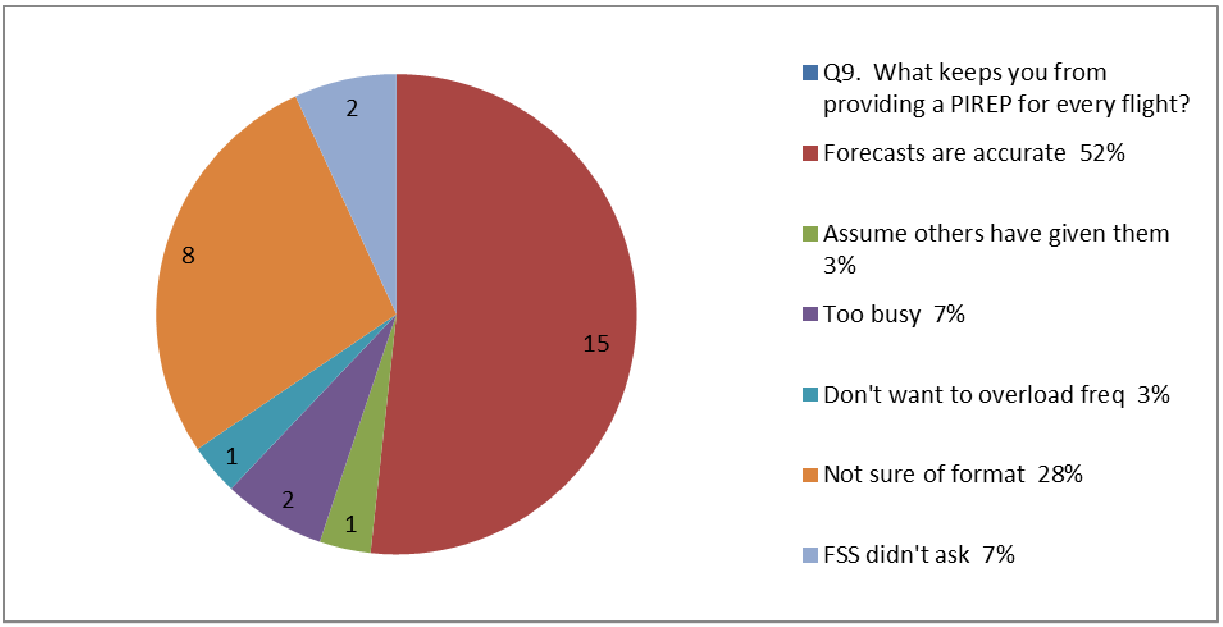
Icing

No PIREPs – weather must be good

They are handy

9. What keeps you from providing a PIREP for every flight?

Circle: a. Forecasts are accurate **15** b. Assume others have given them **1** c. Too busy **2**
d. Don't want to overload the freq **1** e. Not sure of the format to give them **8** f. FSS didn't ask **2**



Comments: Didn't feel it added any value

Am IFR Center Freq Busy

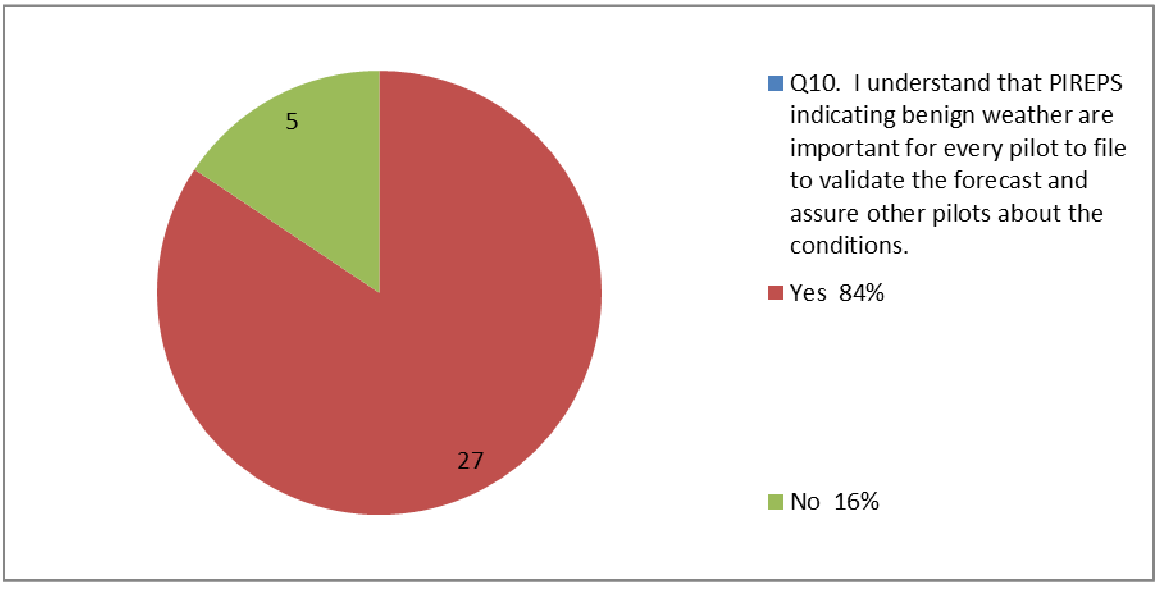
NO ATC *(submitter crossed out question)*

No Radio Contact in the E. Wrangell Mtns!!

I typically fly in very good weather. PIREP isn't needed.

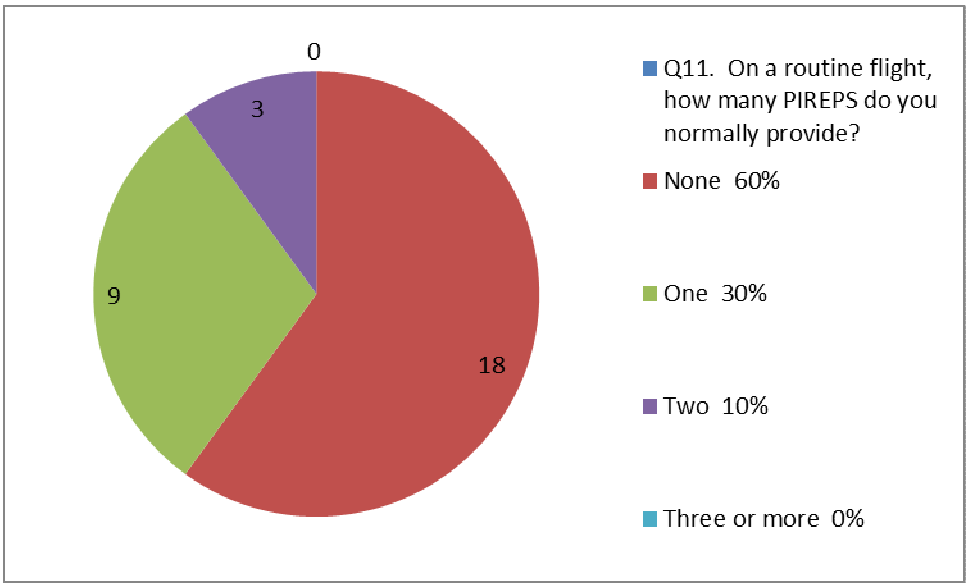
10. I understand that PIREPS indicating benign weather are important for every pilot to file to validate the forecast and assure other pilots about the conditions.

Circle: a. Yes **27** b. No 5



11. On a routine flight, how many PIREPS do you normally provide?

Circle: a. None **18** b. One **9** c. Two **3** d. Three or more **0**



Comments: Depends

Sometimes if weather or conditions marginal or winds or turbulence

Please use the back of this questionnaire to provide additional comments regarding PIREPS. Thank you!

Additional Comments (from back of questionnaire)

FSS requests need to be targeted to time and place info is needed, not boiler plate "PIREPS requested…"

FSS should solicit at specific times and locations to help fill "holes" in observations, or to answer specific questions – how is a weather condition developing, or clearing up.

Develop a "route pirep" format rather than "point" report.

If I'm out on a nice day, local, I think you FSS doesn't need a PIREP.

Then if I give one I am embarrassed I don't know the format. Sometimes I give only temp and location and altitude.

I fly through passes based on PIREPS, very important.

What if my observations/pereptions aren't accurate?

Local Air Taxis do not file PIREPS.

Have been criticized (Hangar Flying) for reporting trace/light ice enroute. I look for icing reports when I plan my IFR flights. But pilots flying non-ice certified planes jump me because they feel it prevents them from launching their non-certified planes into IFR conditions (it's now known icing"). This is a subject that should be worked into safety training/FAAS talks.

Weather, like gold, is where you find it. If it's marginal, it changes. PIREPS are historical points that are most useful when they indicate conditions that are better or worse than forecast or expected. I might choose to continue or discontinue. Flight based on PIREPS on my route of flight, but I always insist on maintaining my own safety, and a way out (or 2 or 5) if what I encounter is different from what the last pilot found.

If wx is different than forecast will normally provide PIREP. Will always provide if asked.

Get AOA gauge $2000

Get a 406 locator $800

I believe the preponderance of wx cams has reduced the number of PIREPS. For those of us in the bush, with no internet, they are still very relevant. I have telephone, no internet.

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