Paper ID: 98462
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IAF SYMPOSIUM ON COMMERCIAL SPACEFLIGHT SAFETY ISSUES (D6)
Commercial Spaceflight Safety and Emerging Issues (1)

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ADVANCING SAFETY STANDARDS IN COMMERCIAL SPACEFLIGHT: CHALLENGES AND INNOVATIONS

Abstract

The commercialization of spaceflight is rapidly accelerating, with private companies increasingly venturing into the industry, mostly space tourism. Considering the industry rapid growth, safety of human and robotic missions, spaceports, reentry vehicles, and in-space transportation becomes critical. This paper explores some of the safety challenges emerging in the commercial spaceflight business and also analyses innovative strategies to mitigate risks via technology, regulation, and operational advancements.

Safety of crew, passengers, and ground personnel is one of the most important commercial spaceflight concerns. Unlike traditional government-led missions, private spaceflight is defined by a myriad of vehicles and operational models that require flexible safety frameworks. Advanced spacecraft, designed with fail-safe mechanisms, autonomous navigation, and improved thermal protection for reentry vehicles, are vital to reducing mission risk.

Geared at against ensuring safety and many other areas of operation for which the industry continues to improve at a very fast pace, regulatory frameworks must quickly adapt to the industry's rapid developments. While agencies like the FAA, the ESA, and all national space authorities currently define their own standards of licensing and compliance though some gaps are left in harmonizing regulations across jurisdictions, national boundaries need to be crossed for the establishment of global safety standards, liability agreements, and risk assessment protocols.

Another important element of commercial spaceflight pertains to safety in spaceports and launch sites. Given the rise in the frequency of launches, risk minimization associated with fueling operations, vehicle integration, and flight termination procedures poses increasing challenges. Integration of the aviation best practices, including real-time telemetry monitoring and automated hazard detection systems, is now being mainstreamed into commercial space operations in order to beef up reliability.

Pilot and crew training must also be changed to meet the challenges of commercial spaceflight; whereas astronauts undergo extensive multi-year training for government missions, a commercial crew is required to follow a training process that is primarily concerned with minimizing training while maximizing safety. Improving crew preparation while decreasing training times has been achieved using advanced simulators, a virtual reality environment, and AI-driven emergency response drills.

Through such a combination of technological improvements, regulatory reforms, and better operational protocols to address these emerging safety issues, commercial spaceflight may become associated with higher reliability and public trust. This paper outlines some thought-provoking key strategies towards enhancing the safety and sustainability of the industry.