



SPORT

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2026 EAA AirVenture

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CELEBRATING THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE U.S.A.

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MEET
THE
UPRT
NETWORK

Pursuing Excellence: Meet the UPRT Network



BY TAYLOR MERSHON, IAC 442603, DR. JEFF GRANGER, IAC 19907, PETE REDDAN, IAC 442754, AND MIKE KLOCH, IAC 436531

At the Chief Judge's Table

IT'S SATURDAY MORNING AT an IAC contest. The safety briefing is done, airplanes are in the conga line, and the first competitor of the day is about to fly. A first-timer, not in Primary. Documents in order. Airplane clean. Pilot legal.

For the chief judge, it's a familiar moment — a new pilot stepping up. It's also a moment where a little more information about the pilot's training in spins and upset prevention and recovery training (UPRT) would be useful.

The UPRT Network was built, in part, to help. It gives a chief judge, an instructor, an insurer, or a pilot themselves assurance about what kind of upset training is behind a given accreditation — it's a way to recognize, share, and build on the good training that already exists across general aviation.

What Is the UPRT Network?

The Upset Prevention and Recovery Training Network is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit trade organization, founded by 10 of the country's most

experienced UPRT providers.

Incorporated in late 2024, the network spent all of 2025 in what its president calls peer-level working sessions — meeting every three weeks, drafting bylaws, and voting on everything that mattered. Officers were installed in November 2025.

Its mission is fourfold: identify and maintain best practices for UPRT in general aviation; encourage UPRT concepts in primary flight training; develop standards for member providers; and reduce GA accident rates and insurance costs through effective training. Loss of control in-flight — LOC-I — is the leading cause of fatal

Fourteen Months, From Conversation to Organization

The UPRT Network's path from informal discussions to public launch at AirVenture 2026.



Fourteen months from the first informal conversations, the UPRT Network publicly launches at AirVenture 2026.



STEVE "LAMBO" LAMBERT, TREASURER



KING EVANS, SECRETARY



MIKE "CUCKOO" KLOCH, VICE PRESIDENT AND CO-CHAIRMAN



JOHN DYE



ROB DUMOVIC



DR. JEFF GRANGER



RICH "DIZZY" STOWELL



MARK KING



PETE "VAPOR" REDDAN, PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN

GA accidents by a wide margin. For the first three items to dent the fourth, somebody has to do the work.

The board members are crucial to the UPRT Network's operations. Pete "Vapor" Reddan is president, Mike "Cuckoo" Kloch is vice president, Steve "Lambo" Lambert is treasurer, and King Evans is secretary. Jeff Granger and Rich Stowell round out the core board. Rich, one of the most recognizable names in GA upset training, is what Pete affectionately calls "the godfather of the group." Directors John Dye, Mark King, Rob Dumovic, and Jared Sebesta complete the founding 10. Each runs an independent business; each accredits the others. You can find their full bios at uprtn.org/board-of-directors.

Pete and Mike are both former military aviators turned independent UPRT providers, and they'd been comparing notes for years about how much the UPRT experience varies provider to provider. Many are outstanding. Others — often well-intentioned — offer a shorter, lighter version than the principles call for. Until recently there was no common standard. No credentialing body. No consistent ground curriculum. And — for a field in the business of saving lives — no data.

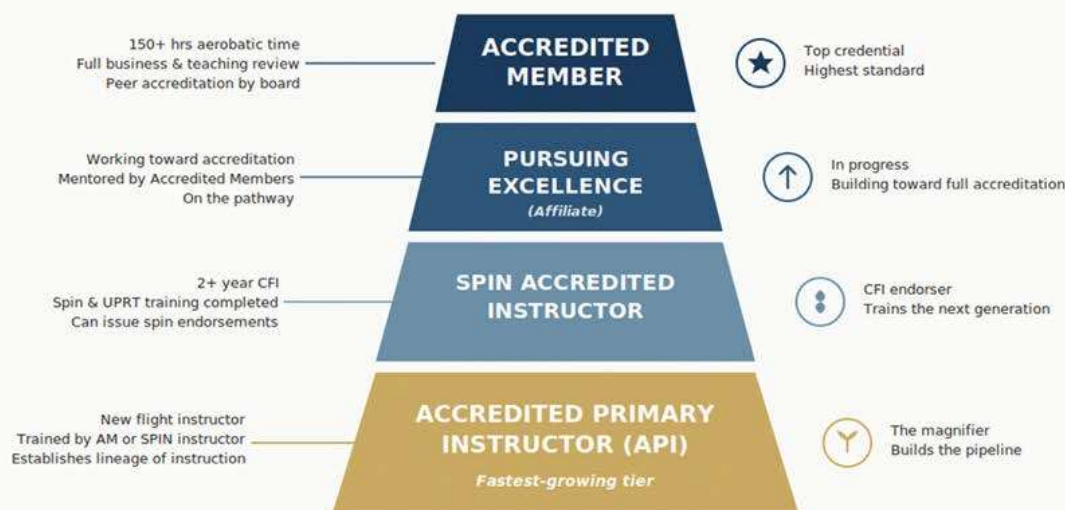
When Pete and Mike started recruiting, Jeff brought an unusual angle. He practiced orthopedic surgery for 32 years, and the accreditation model he kept coming back to was that of the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery.

That organization was freestanding, private, and voluntary. Nobody was forced to become board-certified. But the public learned that credentials mattered, and the presence or absence of board certification became a real signal.

The UPRT Network is modeled on that precedent. It also joins a distinctly American aviation tradition: EAA Warbirds of America, the Aerobatic Competency Evaluators, International Council of Air Shows, and International Aerobatic Club itself are all voluntary self-regulating bodies that established their own standards before a federal agency did it for them.

UPRT Network Membership Structure

Four tiers. One standard. Accreditation by peer review.



THE LOGIC OF THE STRUCTURE

The pyramid inverts the typical credential chart: the newest instructors (API) form the broad base, not the exception. Rich Stowell calls this the **magnifier effect** — a way to extend rigorous upset-training standards into the entire pipeline of new flight instructors, before the airline track pulls them away from general aviation. Every tier connects. Every tier is accountable to the one above it.

UPRT Network • 501(c)(6) Nonprofit Trade Organization • uprtn.org

UPRT Network membership structure. Four tiers, one standard. Accreditation by peer review.

The Standards — and the Bar

The network's membership is structured in four tiers. Understanding them is the fastest way to understand the organization's values.

At the top is the accredited member — an actively practicing UPRT instructor with at least 150 hours of aerobatic time who has agreed to put both their teaching and their business through peer review. That last part isn't a formality. Pete describes it, vividly, as "open-heart surgery on each other's business." Pete and Mike were the first two to undergo accreditation, each running the process they'd established on the other's operation.

The claim gets tested. The network has accepted applicants and turned applicants away. One applicant made it through the flight portion without issue, and then sat down for the ground portion and told Pete flatly that ground training wasn't important. Unfortunately, the gap between the applicant's understanding of how to go about the training and the standards that the UPRT Network is determined to uphold was just too wide to close in that particular case, and the applicant left unaccredited. "You're just not ready if you don't believe in the ground training," Pete said.

The second tier, pursuing excellence, is for UPRT instructors working toward full accreditation. Two members in Northern California, trained from zero aerobatic experience by Pete and Mike over the past year, are preparing for their first reviews — they will potentially be the network's first grassroots members developed entirely inside the system.

The third and fourth tiers came out of a board conversation about what Rich calls "magnifiers" — ways to extend the network's reach into the 18 to mid-20s pilots otherwise on a near-conveyor-belt ride to the airlines. How do you get those potential instructors into upset training early, before the airline job pulls them out of GA altogether?

The answer, the board determined, was two more tiers. A spin-accredited instructor is a CFI of at least two years' standing who's received spin and full UPRT training from an accredited member then been endorsed to the board. Spin-accredited instructors can in turn give the spin endorsement to commercial pilots working toward their CFI.

An accredited primary instructor (API) is a brand-new flight instructor trained — in both spin and UPRT — by an accredited member or a spin-accredited instructor in the network. The point is ensuring lineage: to

Open-Heart Surgery on the Business

What the UPRT Network actually reviews during a peer accreditation.

ACCREDITATION REVIEW — PEER EVALUATION

1. INSTRUCTION

- ☒ Ground curriculum — coherent, complete, tied to published principles
- ☒ Syllabus — clearly written, reproducible, matches what's actually taught
- ☒ In-flight instruction — observed, evaluated, consistent with standards
- ☒ Teaching materials — handouts, diagrams, supporting references

2. AIRCRAFT & EQUIPMENT

- ☒ Aircraft — airworthy, properly certified, appropriate for UPRT
- ☒ Maintenance — logs current, annuals & inspections complete
- ☒ Parachutes — in annual, correctly sized, properly stored
- ☒ Safety equipment — intercom, harnesses, emergency gear

3. BUSINESS LEGITIMACY

- ☒ LLC or entity — real, active, registered
- ☒ Business license — current, compliant with local jurisdiction
- ☒ Taxes — paid; no fly-by-night operations
- ☒ Insurance — adequate coverage for training operations

4. THE INSTRUCTOR

- ☒ CFI certificate — current, appropriate ratings
- ☒ 150+ hours aerobatic time — documented
- ☒ Active UPRT practice — currently teaching, not dormant
- ☒ Agreement to bylaws — signed, understood, willing to be held accountable

PEER. MUTUAL. NOT PAY-TO-PLAY.

Every Accredited Member has been evaluated by another Accredited Member.
Every line on this checklist has been reviewed, flown, read, or verified in person.
The Network has turned applicants away when the bar was not met.

Reviewer signature: _____ Date: _____

A network peer review covers instruction, aircraft, business, and the instructor themselves.

guarantee that the CFI signing your student pilot's logbook got rigorous training in the regulatory material, the principles of upset prevention, and the practical skills to teach both.

The API tier is the network's fastest growing. Six APIs came on in the program's first month. Tennessee Flight Training, with a location at Pete's home airport in Millington, signed on institutionally almost right away. "They were basically like, 'We're in,'" Pete said. "It's safety, it's quality, it's excellence, and it's just going to make the community better."

Principles, Not Proprietary Curriculum

The network doesn't push a single document, a single airplane, a single syllabus, or a single instructor's personality.

The standards are built on material that already exists and is already respected: International Civil Aviation Organization document 10011, the International Air Transport Association UPRT guidance document, the FAA's stall/spin awareness advisory circular and regulatory requirements for spin endorsements, and Rich's Emergency Maneuver Training program, which has quietly been the standard curriculum on the subject in GA for more than two decades.

In the early 1900s, surgical technology was exploding. Young doctors wanted training, and patients wanted modern surgery. Practicing specialists realized there was a need to improve the quality of training and provide accreditation. They formed the first surgical specialty boards.

— Dr. Jeff Granger

Most ICAO and IATA material is written for the airline world. The network's contribution has been to pull out the principles that apply to general aviation — the single-engine, low-altitude, single-pilot environment IAC members actually fly in — and build the accreditation around those. Source material is available at uprtn.org/uprt-resources.

This is also why the network includes instructors with meaningfully different teaching philosophies. Pete's one-day course is built around inoculation — getting the student past the startle so the next time they see an unexpected attitude, they don't freeze. Mike's three- and five-day courses are built around proficiency — keeping the student flying until the recovery is automatic and clean. Both are valid. Both are UPRT. Neither is wrong.

Accreditation asks: Does your business actually exist? Are you teaching the principles? Are you teaching them safely? Are you teaching them well? Is your airplane airworthy? Is your instruction honest? If yes, the network will welcome you.

The IAC Connection

So where does IAC fit into all of this?

IAC contests have always drawn pilots from a tight-knit, generous aerobatic community, and the mentoring and informal vetting that happens around each contest is one of the quiet strengths of the organization. The filter does a lot of work. The network sees itself as a complement to that work, not a replacement — a way to recognize, share, and standardize the training excellence that already exists across IAC and GA more broadly.

The draft document King Evans has been leading — shared with IAC ahead of this article — outlines what a pilot's baseline training should include before or while they're learning competition aerobatics. It proposes a recognizable pathway: spin awareness and recovery, then UPRT appropriate to GA altitudes and aircraft, then aerobatic instruction, then competition. Each topic builds on the last.

The draft covers competition prep, box parameters and minimum altitudes, altimetry and fuel management, physiological and human factors training, stall and spin dynamics, NASA standard procedure spin recovery, engine and system failure in nonstandard attitudes, the HELL check, parachute requirements with a mandatory bailout decision altitude, and maneuver integration through Primary and Sportsman figures with specific review of the split-S. The draft also suggests a network-wide 5 percent discount for verified IAC members on covered courses, with individual providers retaining pricing autonomy on everything else.

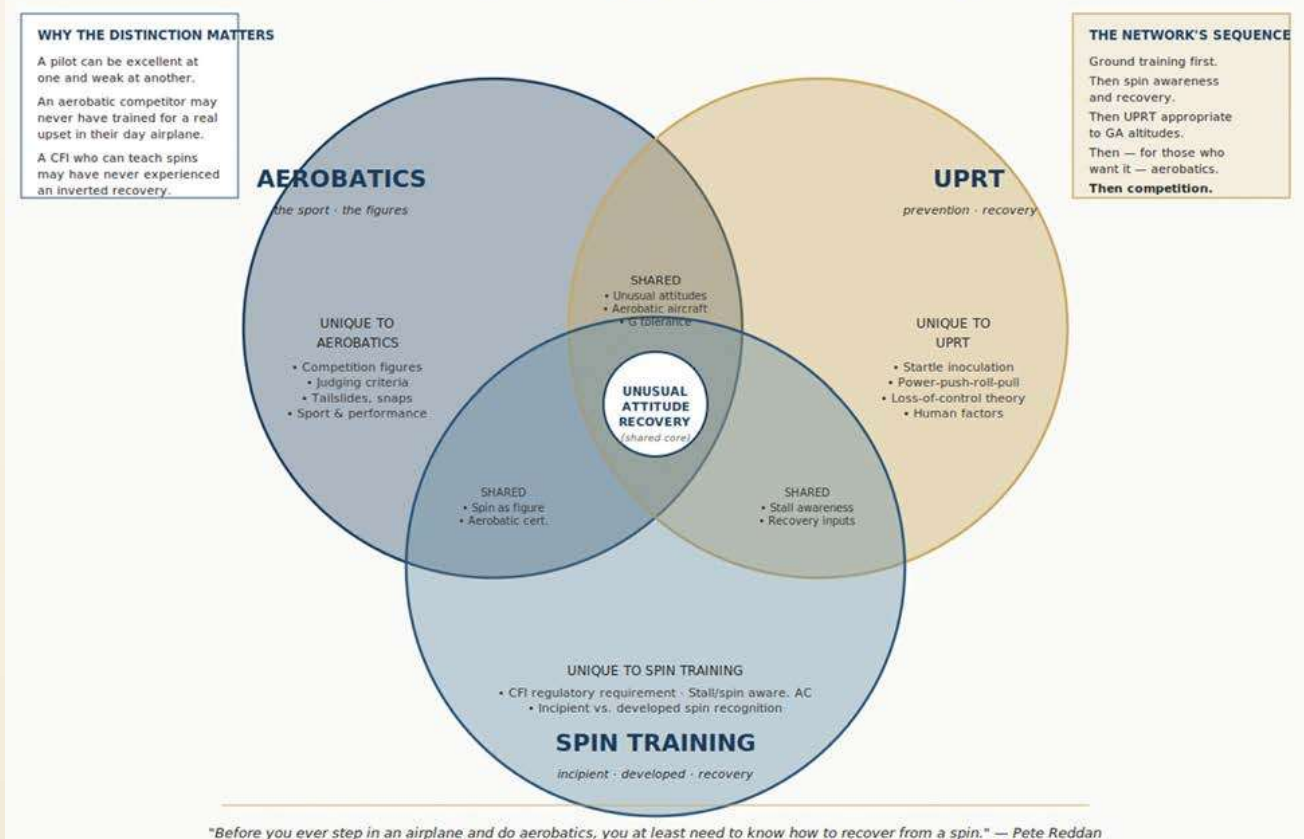
Pete is careful about how he refers to the draft. "I don't know if the right word is partnership," he said. "We are definitely working together on shared principles. They're using us as a peer to help provide those principles to them." Nothing has been formally adopted. The document is in draft, but the conversation is real and ongoing.

There's also a forward-looking argument worth IAC members' attention. The pilots coming up through the regional airlines right now are hitting legacy captain seats — with legacy captain incomes — faster than any generation before them.

"By the time they're 30, probably, a lot of them will be captains at legacy airlines," Pete said. "And think about the disposable income they're going to have at that young age. They're going to go buy the aerobatic airplane. They're going to buy the warbird. There's going to be a very big demand for UPRT, for IAC membership, for competition."

Three Disciplines. One Flight Path.

Aerobatics, UPRT, and spin training overlap — but they are not the same training.



Aerobatics, UPRT, and spin training overlap — but they're not the same training.

That's a wave of new aerobatic pilots arriving over the next decade with resources, ambition, and in many cases not much GA flying outside their airline track. Building a structured pipeline from zero to competition, with recognized training at each stage, is good for IAC, good for the network, good for the insurers, and good for the pilots themselves.

The Data Project

There's no published data set on whether UPRT actually produces safer general aviation pilots. The airline world has figures — it's regulated, surveyed, and has been running UPRT-equivalent training for decades. The military has figures. GA doesn't. That matters because the National Transportation Safety Board, AOPA Air Safety Institute, and FAA all need data before they can recommend or regulate. Without numbers, GA upset training has no standing at the table where safety decisions get made.

That's why the UPRT Network is working on creating a data set. Every client through a network-accredited instructor for UPRT fills out a short survey before training and another after. The questions cover confidence, specific skills, attitudes toward upset scenarios, and what the training actually changed. The target is 100 before-and-after pairs by AirVenture 2026.

As of this writing, they're at about 53. A reasonable person might call that behind schedule. Pete, characteristically, calls it

We're purposely setting a barrier to entry. This is not pay-to-play.
— Pete Reddan

tortoise-and-hare. That's the real test of whether the accreditation standards mean anything: Let the data say what it says. The NTSB, FAA, IAC, and AOPA have all shown interest in the eventual numbers — real visibility for a grassroots nonprofit less than 18 months old.

UPRT Is Not One Thing

Where upset training happens shapes how it must be taught.

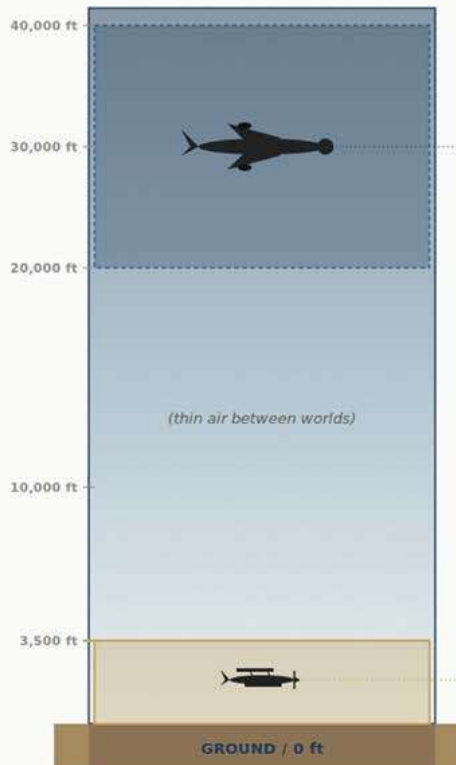
WHY THE ALTITUDE MATTERS

At airline altitude, a recovery has thousands of feet and tens of seconds to complete. Most airline upset training happens in a simulator.

At general aviation altitude, a recovery has hundreds of feet and a handful of seconds. There is no simulator that reliably reproduces the physiology.

Different altitude. Different aircraft. Different aerodynamics. Different training.

The UPRT Network focuses on the band closest to the ground — where the stakes are highest and the published data is nearly zero.



AIRLINE UPRT

20,000 – 40,000 ft

- Simulator-based training
- Jet aerodynamics
- Standardized protocols
- Regulated, well-documented
- Decades of published data

GENERAL AVIATION UPRT

3,500 ft and below

- In-aircraft, real consequences
- Piston & aerobatic aerodynamics

UPRT Network - Not all upset training is the same training

Where upset training happens shapes how it has to be taught. Airline UPRT at altitude versus GA UPRT close to the ground.

Three Things That Aren't the Same

A distinction the board considers foundational is the difference between spin training, UPRT, and aerobatics.

Aerobatics is the practice of flying figures — rolls, loops, spins, hammerheads, tailslides — for sport, competition, or exhibition. Certified airplane, regulated practice area; the thing IAC members live for.

Upset prevention and recovery training teaches pilots to recognize, avoid, and recover from unintended flight attitudes — nose high, nose low, inverted, overbanked — in the airplanes they actually fly. It overlaps with aerobatics but isn't the same discipline. Airline UPRT happens at 20,000 to 40,000 feet. GA UPRT happens at 3,500 feet and below. The training looks different. The recovery techniques are sometimes different. The mindset is different.

Spin training is the narrower practice of teaching pilots to recognize incipient spins, fully developed spins, and the specific control inputs to recover from each. It's a regulatory requirement for CFI candidates. It's also frequently bundled with UPRT and aerobatic training in ways that blur useful distinctions.

The network's position: These three should be taught deliberately, in sequence, by people who know the difference. Ground first. Then spin awareness and recovery. Then UPRT. Then — for those who want it — aerobatic training. After all of that, eventually, competition.

The framework Pete uses for safety is borrowed from education: *knowledge plus application equals skill, and skill equals safety*. Safety isn't a goal; it's an outcome. You don't pursue safety directly. You

We could potentially prove ourselves out of business. Anecdotally, we know UPRT works. Now it's a matter of proving that it works.
— Pete Reddan

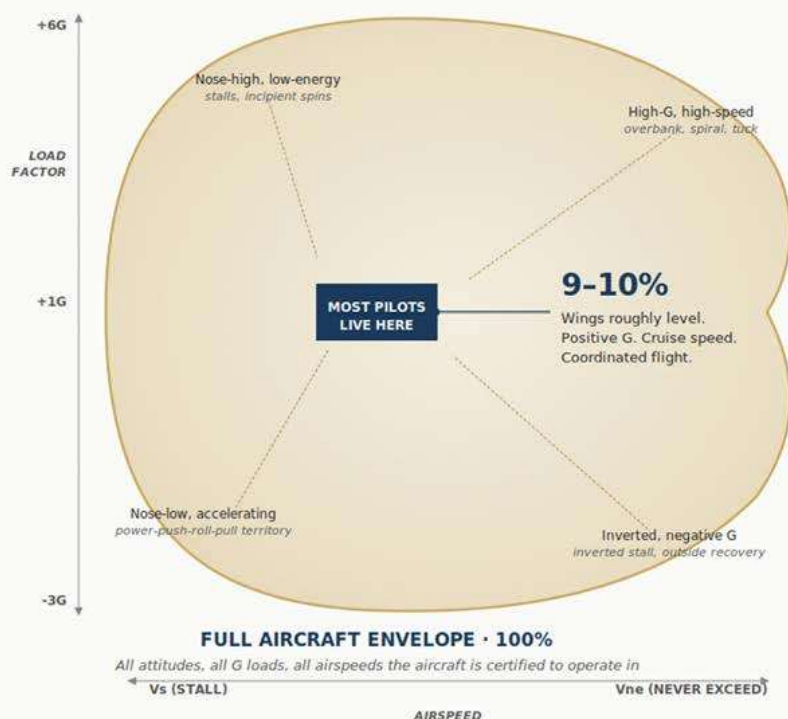
pursue knowledge, application, and skill — and safety arrives as the result.

Getting Ahead of It

Two years ago, the FAA issued a ruling — quietly, in the *Federal Register*, picked up and analyzed by AOPA legal counsel Ian Arendt — that aerobatic instruction may not be provided to student pilots.

The 9% vs. the 100%

Most pilots fly inside a small box. UPRT teaches what lives outside it.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

"I could fill it in for us, but it's like 9, 10% of the actual aircraft envelope is what people fly in.

And we're not even talking about aerobatic airplanes yet. The aerobatic envelope is the full 100%."

— Pete Reddan
UPRT Network President
2026 motto:
PURSUING EXCELLENCE

UPRT training expands pilots' usable envelope. The other 90% is where emergencies live — and where recoveries happen.

Most pilots operate in about 9–10 percent of the aircraft's envelope. The other 90 percent is where emergencies live — and where recoveries happen.

“I have struck the word aerobatic from our UPRT syllabus,” Jeff said. “Because we teach UPRT to our student pilots.”

The ruling arrived without any UPRT provider or aerobatic community being consulted in advance. The government moved first. Providers adapted. The network wants to act first so the government doesn't have to.

Warbirds, the Aerobatic Competency Evaluators, ICAS, and IAC all have histories of creating and enacting voluntary standards before the FAA decided standards were needed. The pattern is familiar, and it works. Self-regulating trade organizations earn credibility, produce data, communicate with regulators, and — in the best case — become the reason the agency doesn't need to regulate.

“That saves government time and resources,” Pete said. “And it allows us to operate a little more fluidly.” Then, more pointedly: “It saves us from the government doing something we really don't want them doing.”

Oshkosh and What Comes Next

AirVenture 2026 is the UPRT Network's public coming-out. Four board members will be on the grounds. Three speaking engagements are in development with EAA. The network is in conversation with IAC about presenting at the IAC Pavilion at least once during the week. The content will be threefold: what the UPRT Network is, what UPRT itself is in the GA context, and the first real look at survey data from the client outcomes project.

The board's hopes for AirVenture: 100 survey responses, the two Northern California grassroots members accredited, and the Australian member finalized. The Australian member would be the network's first international, and it's a case the board is watching closely because Australian GA is far more government-structured than ours, and nobody's sure yet how a voluntary standards model will translate.

In the meantime, the organization keeps growing. The API tier continues to be the fastest-growing category. The network now has members or pending members in Tennessee, Utah, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Northern California, Ohio, and Australia, with conversations underway in several additional states.

The aspiration is to be the kind of organization the eventual big names in aviation training will want to join. Not because they're told to, but because the standard is real, the peers are respected, and the credential actually means something. The network is deliberately building the foundation first.

Ten people have decided to do something about the gap between what most pilots know and what most pilots can actually do when the horizon rolls the wrong way. The introduction is over. Now the work begins.

The UPRT Network is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit trade organization. For information on accreditation, membership, or finding a network-affiliated UPRT provider, visit uprtn.org or contact the board at uprtnetwork@gmail.com. IAC+

TAYLOR MERSHON is the editor of IAC's *Sport Aerobatics* magazine, the *In the Loop* monthly video series, and IAC's other publications. With a background in illustration and graphic design, Taylor has designed logos, graphics, websites, and print materials for various small aviation businesses since early 2020, which eventually landed her a job with EAA in the graphic design department from 2022 to 2023. Taylor is a student pilot, but her favorite roles in the aerobatic world don't involve doing the flying herself; the things she loves best are watching the flights from the ground, sometimes riding along, learning about and caring for the airplanes, helping at contests and other flying events, and gathering stories from the pilots for the IAC's publications. Taylor's

favorite aerobatic airplane is the bright pink Sukhoi Su-26M that her husband, Brooks Mershon, flies in the Advanced category of competition.

JEFF GRANGER started flying in 1972, obtained his private pilot in 1976 and instrument rating in 1988. He has 3,200 hours in a variety of GA and aerobatic aircraft and instructs at Pilot Makers Advanced Flight Academy in Provo, Utah. He trained for aerobatics with Bill Thomas in 1995 and has owned and competed in the Steen Skybolt and Extra 200 and 300L. He flew over 70 regional contests from 1995 to 2017. He now owns and manages the Extra 300L for Pilot Makers and co-owns and manages the Super Decathlon. Along with other current and former Pilot Makers instructors, he helped to form an IAC chapter for Utah in 2022.

PETE REDDAN is the founder of Vapor Global Aviation, an organization committed to excellence in flight training and pursuing viable training solutions generating highly skilled pilots for the aviation industry (VaporGlobalAviation.com). Pete not only continues a 30-plus-year career as a certificated flight instructor, but also provides FAA designated pilot examiner services to the aviation community. In addition, he hosts the podcast “The Way I Taught It” and is currently an adjunct aviation professor at the University of Memphis. Formerly, Pete was a lieutenant colonel and evaluator pilot in the United States Air Force qualified in the KC-10A, T-6A, and C-17A. Over his 20-year career, he logged over 600 hours of combat and combat support flight time. His major awards include two Air Medals, three Aerial Achievement Medals, and the General James H. Doolittle Trophy for professionalism, courage, and leadership during extremely meritorious service in flight. Bio from uprtn.org.

MIKE KLOCH is the CEO and chief instructor pilot for Specialized Aero Works (Fly-Saw.com). He is a three-time National Association of Flight Instructors Master Instructor-Aerobatic, a two-time NAFI Master Instructor, a former Marine Corps F/A-18 pilot, combat veteran, and school-trained aviation safety officer (Naval Postgraduate School). Mike is a contract test pilot and instructor for Epic Aircraft, Stratos Aircraft, Elite Pilot services, and others. He has production, certification, and R&D flight test experience. Mike is a two-time NAFI Master certificated flight instructor, instrument and multiengine instructor, and an FAA Safety Team (FAAST) representative. He is also a member of the Master Instructors LLC board of review. Mike has a Bachelor of Science degree from Oregon State University and two Associate of Applied Science aviation degrees from Central Oregon Community College. He is also commercial and instrument rated in helicopters with night vision goggles qualifications. Bio from uprtn.org.