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Growth and Optimism Highlight Contract Maintenance Industry Survey

Alexandria, VA. The Aeronautical Repair Station Association (ARSA), which represents nearly 700 members of the international aviation maintenance and alteration community, recently published the results of its 2007 member survey. The survey highlighted the success and subsequent growing needs of the industry, as international contract maintenance stations continue to expand their role of ensuring safety and efficiency in the skies.

An overview of the membership reveals that the overwhelming majority of ARSA members (98.5 percent) hold Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) repair station certificates; more than two-thirds (68.42 percent) are also European Aviation Safety Administration approval holders. With these certifications comes a considerable level of oversight, with 42 percent reporting eleven or more external audits last year by regulators, customers, and third party accreditation bodies.

The survey results suggest that the repair station industry is thriving economically. More than two-thirds (71.43 percent) of survey respondents plan to add positions and/or hire new workers in the coming year. No survey respondent reported plans to eliminate positions. Additionally, 83 percent of the respondents are optimistic about business prospects for the coming year, only nine percent are ambivalent, and fewer than eight percent are pessimistic.

However, ARSA members are facing obstacles. The shortage of technical workers was cited as the single greatest challenge facing the aviation maintenance industry, with close to 80 percent of respondents having had trouble finding skilled technical workers. Additional areas of concern include the availability of Instructions for Continued Airworthiness (70 percent of the respondents report having had some difficulty obtaining maintenance manuals from the manufacturers), and the need to provide health insurance to employees (74.44 percent of the respondents reported that they had to reduce benefits or ask workers to shoulder more of the costs of health insurance in recent years).

The understaffing of the FAA also remains a concern. A quarter (24.81 percent) of the respondents report losing customers or foregoing business opportunities because of regulatory delays resulting from inadequate FAA staffing.

The survey was conducted between February 26 and March 6, 2007, using SDI Weblink's online survey system. The ARSA key contacts for each repair station and corporate member was invited to participate in the survey through three E-mails sent over the course of a week. Although the survey was anonymous, the system was configured to prevent duplicate responses from the same individual. The survey margin of error is 7.3 percent.