SAFETY FIRST

By: *Don Nix, District 8 Safety Director*

I wanted to share the information I gleaned from reading a recent batch of accident reports. In the time period I reviewed, there were 22 accident reports, of which 14 involved injuries to one or more people, and 8 were solely property damage.

INJURY ACCIDENTS

Of the 14 injury accidents, 12 - yes TWELVE - occurred while the model was on the ground, during or just after starting the engine, before takeoff. Here's a very brief synopsis:

1. Fingers in prop while reaching for transmitter after starting engine -stitches in 2 fingers.
2. Adjusting needle - lacerations of thumb and two fingers, required surgery to repair bone and tendons.
3. Stitches required on finger from contact with prop after starting engine.
4. Started engine, throttle surged, plane got away, cut arm. Needed medical attention.
5. Prop hit finger while removing glow plug starter battery.
6. Cut finger while adjusting needle, which had homemade extension. (And apparently didn't work too well.)
7. Started engine, reached around prop, engine went to full throttle. Two severed tendons and 32 stitches.
8. Plane swung around while running on ground. Cut thumb and 3 fingers, required treatment for 7 months.
9. Cut finger in prop while adjusting needle - 10 stitches.
10. Lost control on landing, model veered into pilot, cut arm, required stitches.
11. Started engine, owner said radio "cord" (assume neck strap?) caught a part of the model, causing it to swerve into owner. 10 inch wound in leg. Taken to hospital in ambulance, remained there 3 days. Off work for 3 weeks.
12. Lost control on landing, hit two other flyers (who had been warned "landing" and who had acknowledged). One minor injury, the other was knocked down and broke arm and pelvis.
13. Running up engine after starting; model "turned into owner," cut arm, extensive damage to muscles and tendons, re quiring treatment over period of 3 months.
14. Started engine, then got finger in prop. Cut finger and fractured bone.

PROPERTY DAMAGE ACCIDENTS

1. Another flyer turned on same frequency, although the flyer already in the air had the pin. Damaged automobile.
2. Engine died on takeoff; model veered into van; damaged.
3. Glider snagged with tow line, hit car; damage.
4. Model believed to have encountered interference; damaged car.
5. Helicopter flew away, believed to have been caused by intentional interference by neighbor in area on ham frequency.

(Which prompts repeating an oft-stated caution: It doesn't matter HOW GOOD YOU ARE, if someone turns on an other transmitter on your frequency. You ARE going to crash!)

6. Model collided with car, no reason given; damage.
7. Started model, "went to full throttle," hit and damaged truck.
8. "Lost control" - hit/damaged vehicle.

Of the 12 injuries sustained on the ground, almost all of them would have seemed to be rather easily preventable by simply doing what we all KNOW to do, but which most of us have neglected at one time or another:
Never start a model without a helper holding it.

Do all needle adjusting from BEHIND the propeller.

Admittedly, there usually isn't much we can do about interference and/or mechanical electrical failures, except to be meticulous about keeping our equipment in good condition, keeping batteries charged properly, etc.

Novice flyers should always have an experienced modeler check out their equipment, for sure before a first flight.

In-flight incidents/accidents can be minimized by keeping a healthy distance from the flight line for everything except takeoffs and landings.

I fail to see any good reason to make Mach 2 high speed passes right under the other pilots' noses. Show off all you want, but keep it AWAY from the flight line and pits.

You might really enjoy showing what a hotshot pilot you are by executing consecutive inverted outside whifferdills 4 feet from the flight line, but it might be offset by the embarrassment of having to apologize to a person you've injured if someone happens to turn on their transmitter on your frequency. However, we CAN minimize or even eliminate almost all those starting-up incidents accidents by just taking a few seconds more, not rushing the process, and using our heads. Most of us spend more time bragging and telling lies to our fellow modelers than we do flying anyway, so taking just an extra minute or so to be extra careful is hardly a burden.

Remember....in addition to avoiding injuries and damage accidents, the hobby you save may be your own.