



Direction

AIRCREW COGNITIVE TRAINING — CORE COMPETENCY TWO OF THREE

Focus without direction is just noticing — attention pointed at the right thing with nowhere to go. Direction is what turns attention into action: a clear plan, a documented finding, a decision that leaves no ambiguity about what happens next. It is the second thing this program asks of every 121 aircrew professional, and the one most often skipped under pressure.

What Direction Actually Is

The FAA's own guidance on aeronautical decision-making formalizes this into a repeatable process: the DECIDE model — Detect a change, Estimate its significance, Choose a safe outcome, Identify options, Do something, and Evaluate the result ([FAA-H-8083-25, Pilot's Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge](#)). Under low workload, most people run some version of this loop automatically. Under high workload, fatigue, or a rushed turn, it's the step people skip — they detect the problem and react, without ever cleanly choosing or documenting the decision they just made.

Direction is what closes that gap. It is the discipline of finishing the thought: not just noticing a finding, but stating what it means, what will be done about it, and how anyone reading the record afterward will know the decision was made deliberately rather than assumed.

Why It Breaks Down

Ambiguous information makes direction hard — an intermittent fault, a marginal weather call, a reading that's close to the limit but not clearly over it. Pressure to decide fast makes it harder still, because the DECIDE loop's slower steps — identifying real alternatives, evaluating the outcome — are exactly the steps time pressure cuts first. The result isn't usually a wrong decision. It's a decision that was never actually finished, documented, or communicated to the next person picking up the task.

In the Cockpit and On the Floor

A go-around call, a diversion decision, a choice to hold short of a runway — each is direction in its purest form: attention converted into a stated, committed action. On the maintenance floor, an MEL deferral, a non-routine finding writeup, or the call to pull a borescope and look closer are the same act. In both worlds, the decision isn't complete until it's been said out loud, written down, and handed off clearly enough that the next shift doesn't have to guess what was actually decided.

Building the Habit

- Run the loop on purpose. When something changes, consciously detect, estimate its significance, and choose — don't let the reaction skip the decision.



- Document the decision, not just the finding. A complete shift turnover or write-up states what was found, what was decided, and why — not just what was observed.
- Brief the alternative before you need it. Naming what you'll do if the plan doesn't hold keeps a decision from being made twice, once calmly and once in a scramble.
- Evaluate after the fact. Close the loop by checking whether the decision produced the outcome it was meant to — that's the step most often skipped, and the one that makes the next decision better.

What This Program Asks

Every professional is asked to give clear direction when conditions get ambiguous — not a guess quietly acted on, but a decision that is stated, documented, and handed off cleanly enough that no one downstream has to reconstruct what was actually meant.

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REFERENCES

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