

# Space safety meeting held in Chicago

May 14 2007

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The European Space Agency and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration are co-sponsoring an international space safety conference in Chicago.

The organization's second annual meeting this week is to focus on environmental, human and technical space safety, but will also include legal and regulatory issues as near-Earth missions increase and as space tourism and commercial space flights worldwide become commonplace.

The space agencies say today's worldwide level of space activity is reminiscent of the nascent aviation industry during the first decades of last century as increasing numbers of aircraft took to the skies to deliver mail, cargo and passengers.

During aviation's early days there were few, if any, licensing or training requirements for pilots and aircraft were built to widely differing manufacturing standards. Once in the air, pilots and passengers were pretty much on their own; there were nearly no safety, technical, engineering, traffic control or other regulations.

But, as with aviation during the last century, today space is becoming more crowded and spaceflight activity is growing.

The International Association for the Advancement of Space Safety's conference runs through Wednesday.

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