

One happy ending jet Blue lands safely at LAX

Any questions about why jetBlue is consistently ranked America's favorite airline?

In addition to multiple-channel Direct TV availability for every passenger, cheap fares, and in-cabin security measures on all planes, the recent episode over Los Angeles proves they buy good airplanes and have well-trained pilots.

For what seemed an eternity, the jetBlue flight from Burbank, California to New York City circled southern California airports in an effort to burn off some of the fuel they had taken on for the cross-country flight.

Cable television news outlets both enlightened and confused viewers by saying the airliner had "dumped" fuel and then stating that the particular Airbus A320 aircraft could not dump fuel and it would have to be burned. As the 150-seat airplane circled with its flaps and landing gear down, the fuel slowly was consumed.

The incredible camera work provided by news helicopters gave a close-up look at the problem faced by this jetBlue flight. Upon takeoff, the front landing gear wheels had turned to a 90 degree angle from where they should have faced and would not retract. A problem with the landing gear refusing to retract is known by the flight crew immediately. To correct the problem, all this pilot and crew could do was consult with the Airbus manufacturer, their headquarters, the control

tower, and other airline pilots who might have experience in landing with a perpendicular front landing gear.

Happy endings have been in somewhat scarce supply in the nation's news of late. The country is at war in a far away land - with no end in sight. Katrina hit the city of New Orleans and devastation was unfathomable. Then, Rita. As though to take advantage of the tragedy that befell the Gulf Coast, gas prices at the pump skyrocketed. Public utilities have announced crippling rate hikes on the poor.

Yet, on a cloudless afternoon over Los Angeles, with a blue sky not always present, this new airplane being flown by a pilot who was never identified before he landed, slowly floated to earth, making contact with the tarmac which had been foamed to reduce fire danger, like a feather on a still day. First the rear landing gear wheels were brought to the runway and the plane was slowed as the front, inoperable gear was held off the runway. Slowly, deliberately, the front gear was brought down. As the rubber burned off the tires, flames held to the ground. The pilot, nameless at the time of landing but soon to become a hero to the country, centered the unyielding landing gear post on the runway center white line. Yard after yard, he held it steady. Then it stopped. One man. One crew. 140 grateful passengers. One happy ending. The nation needed it. A very happy ending.

Diploma mills in Wyoming

Trent Blankenship's departure cost Wyoming its strongest advocate for eliminating the state as a safe haven for bogus degree-selling diploma mill operations.

Others at the Department of Education may not have the same conviction. Some seem to covet the junkets that come with compliance with the highly unusual state laws which allow these businesses to set up shop here for a small fee. The state is selling the rights to operate from a Wyoming base for a pittance.

So long as both department employees and state legislators relish the trips to exotic lands, eliminating these operations may not be possible.

The debate may hinge on whether the state wants to tolerate everything that is bad about these degree sellers just to appease a single operation which combines the worst of a diploma mill (nonaccreditation) with the best of a normal school (classrooms and faculty).

Preston University has had plenty of time to gain accreditation. Their defense of expense doesn't wash. There are schools in trades like cosmetology that have a handful of students but can afford the accreditation process. Cheeks International Academy of Beauty Culture is accredited by the National Accrediting Commission of Cosmetology Arts and Sciences. At three locations - Cheyenne, Greeley and Fort Collins.

Cheeks' average class size is about 42. If they can afford the accreditation process, so can Preston University. If they refuse to do so, they will no great loss to Cheyenne.

Only College America and the University of Phoenix, of Cheyenne's degree-granting businesses, are accredited.

American City University, American Global University, American Capital University, Paramount University of Technology, and Kennedy-Western University are all non-accredited. American City and American Global are second story operations. American Capital, Paramount and Kennedy-Western operate from basement offices.

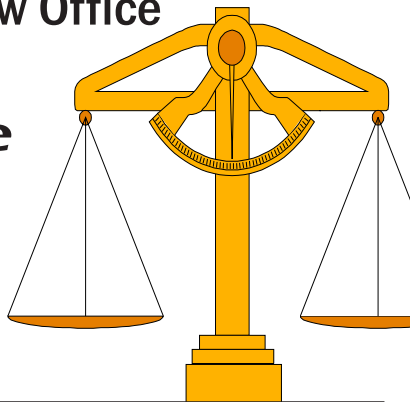
The DOE has reported that American Capital has "asked" that their license be taken. The state should not wait until these degree sellers ask to be taken out.

Legislation needs to be passed which will require every one of them (and Preston) to become accredited like virtually every other state requires. If they do not like that condition, they can open up a storefront office in Mississippi, next to the degree seller from where police chief Bob Fecht bought a master's degree. Wyoming is almost as bad as these degree peddlers. We sell them a license. If they simply buy our license, they can set up shop here. Just buy our license. Open a tiny office, get some stamps and scam.

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Utility rates

Cheyenne Light, Fuel and Power recently announced an annual application was filed with the Wyoming Public Service Commission for approval to "pass through" rate hikes to residential and small business customers for natural gas.

A typical residential customer, using 8 dekatherms of natural gas per month, would see an increase of \$18.81 (27.9%) per month. An "average" small business, using 45 dekatherms of natural gas per month, would see an increase of \$105.82, or 31% per month.

Cheyenne Light does offer an Average Monthly Payment program to balance the monthly charges. For eleven months, an average estimated monthly billing would be paid and in the twelfth month, the "trued up" balance would be due.

Xcel Energy, former owner of Cheyenne

Light recently announced considerably greater rate hikes in Colorado.

Rick Kaysen, CEO of Cheyenne Light, was asked by the Cheyenne Herald if there might be further increases in the near future. Based on a much bigger entity like Xcel raising rates by a higher percentage, it seemed likely. Kaysen acknowledged that the supply of natural gas might not meet the demand and that a second hike could be seen.

Asked about electricity rates, Kaysen said the annual application involving those rates comes December 1. An average hike as the result of a settlement a few years back will expire and will offset, to some extent, any need for an increase. But, because much of the electricity used by Cheyenne Light customers is natural gas fueled generation (coal and wind are the others), such a hike seems imminent.

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