No. 98-11

Subject:
Aircraft Transponders

Distribution:
All DOI Pilots

Discussion:
Some aircraft are equipped with onboard Traffic Collision Avoidance Systems (TCAS). This system is an invaluable tool, which alerts pilots to possible airspace conflicts. However, TCAS can only recognize other aircraft that are squawking a transponder code. Although "see and avoid" is the practiced standard among flight crews, an aircraft emitting a transponder code adds an additional measure of safety by being electronically visible to TCAS equipped aircraft.

Recommendation:
Pilots should keep transponders squawking at all times when airborne unless otherwise directed by Air Traffic Control. This is vitally important now that some of the wildland fire fighting aircraft are equipped with TCAS.

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