Garmin Autoland to Receive the 2020 Robert J. Collier Trophy

Washington, DC, June 3, 2021 – The National Aeronautic Association (NAA) is pleased to announce that Garmin Autoland has been named as the recipient of the 2020 Robert J. Collier Trophy for “… designing, developing, and fielding Garmin Autoland – the world’s first certified autonomous system that activates during an emergency to safely control and land an aircraft without human intervention.”

The Collier Trophy is awarded annually for “… the greatest achievement in aeronautics or astronautics in America, with respect to improving the performance, efficiency, and safety of air or space vehicles, the value of which has been thoroughly demonstrated by actual use during the preceding year.” The list of Collier recipients represents a timeline of air and space achievements, marking major events in the history of flight dating back to 1911.

While rare, unfortunate pilot incapacitation accidents, and others like them, are almost always fatal. Garmin Autoland was born of a moral responsibility and obligation to improve and enhance the safety of the entire aviation industry.

In the event of an emergency, such as a pilot incapacitation, a passenger can activate Garmin Autoland to autonomously land the aircraft with a simple press of a dedicated button. Autoland can also initiate automatically if the system detects no pilot interaction. Once activated, the system calculates a flight path to the most suitable airport, while avoiding terrain and adverse
weather, initiates a stabilized approach to the runway and lands the aircraft – without pilot or passenger intervention. Garmin Autoland is designed to provide the pilot, passenger, and air traffic control with confidence and security that the aircraft will autonomously aviate, navigate, and communicate en route to a safe destination in the event of an emergency.

“Autoland began as a simple exploration to develop automation technology for general aviation aircraft,” said Cliff Pemble, Garmin president and CEO. “This exploration resulted in the first automated system that can safely fly and land an aircraft in an emergency without human intervention. It is a tremendous honor for Autoland to be recognized as one of the greatest achievements in aviation history. We owe this accomplishment to the many Garmin associates who dedicated themselves to creating this game-changing aviation safety technology.”

“The Garmin Autoland system marks a significant improvement in civil aviation,” affirmed NAA Chairman Jim Albaugh. “It’s ability to take over an airplane with a disabled pilot and land it safely will save many lives in the future. It’s a remarkable technical achievement and clearly merits the Collier Trophy.”

The Collier Trophy Selection Committee, comprised of 35 aviation and aerospace professionals, reviewed presentations from seven nominees and selected Garmin Autoland as the recipient on June 2.

Members of the Collier Trophy Selection Committee:

Jim Albaugh, Chairman, NAA
Thierry Betbeze, Dassault Falcon
James Bourke, International Aerobatic Club
Christopher Brunner, Raytheon Technologies
Pete Bunce, General Aviation Manufacturers Association
Leda Chong, Gulfstream
Gary Dunn, Aviation Partners

Roei Ganzarski, magniX
Patricia Gilbert, National Air Traffic Controllers Association
Angela Gittens, Schiphol USA
Christopher Hart, Hart Solutions, LLC
Duane Hawkins, Spirit Aerosystems
Kathryn Hughes, National Aviation Hall of Fame
Carl Johnson, Treasurer, NAA
Tim Keating, The Boeing Company
Leo Knaapen, Bombardier
Charles Lyon, Northrop Grumman
Samantha Magill, Vice-Chair, NAA
Clay McConnell, Airbus
Candace McGraw, Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport
Mary Miller, Signature Aviation
Mary Claire Murphy, Textron Aviation
Mark Ofsthun, Honda Aircraft Company
Ken Panos, Aerojet Rocketdyne
Eric Peterson, Aero Club of Northern CA
Eric Pierce, Lockheed Martin
Peter Prowitt, GE Aviation
Darryl Roberson, Rolls-Royce North America
Todd Simmons, Cirrus Aircraft
Joan Sullivan Garrett, MedAire
Brad Thress, FlightSafety International
Read Van de Water, Safran USA
Pam Williams, Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals
Carl Wolf, Garmin International
Clyde Woltman, Leonardo Company

The 2020 Collier Trophy will be formally presented on a date to be determined. For more information or to view a complete list of previous recipients of the Collier Trophy, please visit www.naa.aero.

*The National Aeronautic Association is a non-profit, membership organization devoted to fostering America's aerospace leadership and promoting public understanding of the importance of aviation and space flight to the United States.*

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