

Opinion: Safety essential to a state that depends so much on tourism

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

In a state like Nevada, there's almost nothing worse than a tragedy colliding with tourism.

Whether it's a train derailment, a car accident or something as horrific as the deadly crash at this month's Reno Air Races, it's important to remember that we often push against the boundaries of our comfort zones when we engage in such a unique experience. Sometimes watching danger up close is what makes an event a never-forgotten experience.

The Reno Air Races is one of many late summer events in Northern Nevada that annually attracts thousands during the ideal time of year to be outdoors.

There's a nonstop parade of activity, beginning with the Hot August Nights car rallies, continuing through the well-attended Sparks rib cook-off, the bizarre Burning Man event in the Black Rock Desert, a hot-air balloon festival, the Street Vibrations motorcycle experience, camel races in Virginia City and the Reno Air Races, staged north of town at an airport in Stead.

I've been invited many times to the air races, but have never been in Reno when it's been staged.

After the crash of stunt pilot Jimmy Leeward's souped-up, World War II-vintage, single-engine P-51 Mustang near a spectator grandstand, the question that hangs over the event now is whether it will ever be staged again.

Certainly, the financial considerations of insuring future

events after the Sept. 16 tragedy will play into the decision. But the more crucial issue will be how sponsors will guarantee the safety of participants and spectators in the future.

Read the whole story