

The correct slang term is "cato". It has never been an acronym. Someone heard the term used at a launch and not knowing any better, they assumed it was an acronym. They then made up a sequence of words that fit the false acronym. How can we prove a negative? Well, maybe at some point I can dig through boxes and boxes of old Model Rocketry Magazines and see how they used the term and if they supplied a definition, but how about this from the real world? The acronym fanatics insist that it means "Catastrophe At Take Off" or Catastrophe After Take Off", which is illogical on a few levels. First, the "At" vs. "After" confusion. This is the first sign that this was a contrived set of words invented to fit the letters and make an acronym. Second, rockets do not "Take off". Aircraft "Take Off", the McKenzie Brothers "Take Off" (eh?). Rockets "Lift Off" or if they are from the 1950's or 1960's they might "Blast Off".

Now onto the real world of engineering and rocket science. How about a satellite solid rocket or liquid engine that has a failure? They call it a "catastrophic failure". They do not "take off" - they are in or on their way to space and/or orbit when the failure occurs. The failure can occur at any point in the motor/engine burn. Many nozzle failures occur late in the burn. Ditto for casing failures. Here are some references to real world use of the term catastrophic failure and some links to respected rocket folks defending the abbreviation truth vs. acronym 'bogosity'.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rocket\\_engine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rocket_engine)

<http://www.jstor.org/pss/2684410>

<http://www.satellitetoday.com/st/topnews/16871.html>

[http://pdf.aiaa.org/preview/CDReadyMJPC2005\\_1177/PV2005\\_4363.pdf](http://pdf.aiaa.org/preview/CDReadyMJPC2005_1177/PV2005_4363.pdf)

<http://www.safesimplesoon.com/faq.htm#4>

Most of the online references with "CATO" the acronym listed were created in the recent past because there was no internet or www decades ago when the slang term was first used. The newcomers did a web search, found the bogus definition and propagated it to many other sites. So, you can find lots of websites that use the acronym and "Take Off" but they cannot cite a source for their information. That is because it was invented and then copied over and over like a bad virus.

Here is what people who were around many decades ago have to say and unless I find something in writing in old publications, this may be your best sources to seek verification, since real verification is what you want:

<http://forums.rocketshoppe.com/showpost.php?p=53413&postcount=8>

<http://forums.rocketshoppe.com/showpost.php?p=53801&postcount=30>

<http://forums.rocketshoppe.com/showpost.php?p=59692&postcount=40>

<http://forums.rocketshoppe.com/showpost.php?p=59800&postcount=46>

<http://forums.rocketshoppe.com/showpost.php?p=59806&postcount=47>

<http://forums.rocketshoppe.com/showpost.php?p=59854&postcount=49>

Those last two were good ones...

And now, we find that being run over by a car is a catastrophic failure, certainly not at, during, or near a "Take Off":  
[http://www.nar.org/pinkbook/A\\_glossary.html](http://www.nar.org/pinkbook/A_glossary.html)

Oh golly, gosh, gee whiz: here is an actual definition including the approved abbreviation and since they always use all caps in these abbreviations it appears as "CATO":  
[http://www.nar.org/pinkbook/C\\_abbreviations.html](http://www.nar.org/pinkbook/C_abbreviations.html)

Do I still need to spend 80 hours digging through 40 years of magazines?

We need to get those bogus definition websites cleaned up. This is like trying to fix bogus Wikipedia info.

-Fred Shecter