

FLYING LESSONS for March 17, 2011

suggested by this week's aircraft mishap reports

FLYING LESSONS uses the past week's mishap reports to consider what *might* have contributed to accidents, so you can make better decisions if you face similar circumstances. In almost all cases design characteristics of a specific make and model airplane have little direct bearing on the possible causes of aircraft accidents, so apply these *FLYING LESSONS* to any airplane you fly. Verify all technical information before applying it to your aircraft or operation, with manufacturers' data and recommendations taking precedence. You are pilot in command, and are ultimately responsible for the decisions you make.

If you wish to receive the free, much-expanded *FLYING LESSONS* report each week, email "subscribe" to mastery.flight.training@cox.net.

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This week's lessons:

Let's stop doing this to one another. I was in San Antonio, Texas, last weekend for [Beech Bonanza recurrent training](#) in a flying club A36. The night before my return home I checked the [Forecast Icing Potential \(FIP\)](#) page of the [FAA's aviation weather website](#), and learned of forecast moderate or great icing from the surface to over 9000 feet across most of Oklahoma and southern Kansas. Some areas further warned of [supercooled, large droplet ice](#), which can cause heavy accumulations of clear or mixed ice in very short periods of time, and are beyond the certification requirements even of ice-certified ("known ice") airplanes. Obviously, I was going nowhere the next morning.

See:

www.bppp.org

http://aviationweather.gov/adds/icing/icing_nav.php

www.aviationweather.gov

<http://webs.wichita.edu/?u=ICING&p=/SLD/>

A double-check the next morning confirmed the previous forecast, the point further emphasized by a couple early-morning pilot reports (PIREPs) of ice. I had the airplane scheduled to return at 1 pm but extended the reservation through the full day, since it appeared a cold front might clear the skies in the afternoon.

But another pilot was scheduled to take the Bonanza to St. Louis and back the following day, I learned when I checked the club's online schedule. I looked up the pilot's contact information in the club directory and sent him a message: I was delayed by ice, there was still a chance I would be able to get home that day, but I wanted him to have as much time to make alternate arrangements if I could not make it back.

A little later I checked my smart phone and found an email reply: "I have the aircraft scheduled to do [a volunteer medical transportation] flight for two cancer patients," he wrote. "A noble cause," I typed in reply. "I'll let you know as soon as possible if I cannot make it back in time for your flight."

Now, I do not suspect the other pilot was attempting to influence my decision-making in any way, or pressure me to alter my plans by linking my schedule to his assisting the victims of a terrible medical condition. But I could immediately see how such a simple statement, even inadvertently, could perhaps compel a less experienced pilot to go against the airplane's certification and his/her personal minimums, or push someone who was teetering on the edge of a questionable go/no-go decision over the edge against his/her better judgment, thinking their weather evaluation should in some way change because of what someone else did or was going to do.

The entire volunteer medical flight network is under regulatory scrutiny as a result of a number of fatal accidents, most due to attempting flight in adverse weather, the pilot apparently choosing to fly in questionable conditions because of the perceived “mission” of volunteer, non-emergency transportation of ambulatory patients. In fact, NTSB has just announced a [Volunteer Pilot Safety Stand-down](#) to continue Federal efforts to improve the “charity medical flight” safety record.

See www.abuys.com/pilotsafety/

Back to my point, a less-experienced pilot might have let this new information, that the airplane was “needed” for a generous charity trip that would make life a little easier for two cancer patients needing to travel a few hundred miles, unduly influence his/her decision to wait until forecast icing conditions blew away. I could even see myself being tempted to take off sooner if this came when I was fighting additional pressures to get home quickly, combined with the natural “can do” mentality of pilots.

We may all do this inadvertently when we “talk up” our exploits in hangar flying sessions, or make broad statements in the context-void world of internet chat rooms, or radio the next pilot that “it’s ok, I made it.” You never know the experience level of persons in the audience, or the other factors they’re facing that might add to the impression they get from your input.

Yes, we are all responsible for the decisions we make as pilot-in-command. But accident history shows that we are also susceptible to suggestion where our no/go-go and continue/divert decisions are concerned.

So consider your audience even when making seemingly innocent or unrelated statements to other pilots. Give solid facts, but avoid persuasion. We’re in this together...provide good information, accurate information, but try to withhold anything that provides no benefit if mentioned but has the potential for harm if taken out of the context you intend.

Comments? Questions? Tell us what you think at mastery.flight.training@cox.net.



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We have been focusing on the 10 most common causes of fatal general aviation mishaps according to the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration. This month we turn our attention to Top 10 Cause #8: Loss of Control En Route/During Cruise.

To begin, review the following summaries of some of the accidents that make up this category of accident (although some don’t seem to fit the category title, I’m sticking with the FAA’s breakdown to conform with any similar studies). Then, after some thought, send in your observations on the circumstances that may underlie each cause, your ideas for *FLYING LESSONS* that teach techniques for avoiding similar mishaps, and proposed amendments to checkride preparation and recurrent training lesson plans to get these *LESSONS* to the pilot who need them most. Be sure to identify the scenario number in each of your

comments.

Scenario #1

The certified flight instructor and the private pilot were returning to the airport after completing a flight review. Data obtained from the onboard primary flight display revealed that as the airplane approached the airport, it entered a snap roll maneuver. The airplane collided with terrain inverted approximately one-quarter of a mile from the airport. Examination of the airframe and engine revealed no pre-mishap anomalies.

Scenario #2

The private pilot was reported overdue and an emergency locator transmitter signal was detected. The airplane had collided with terrain in a near vertical, nose down attitude. VMC prevailed. Examination revealed the engine was developing power at the time of impact. No preimpact malfunctions were discovered. The position of the airplane was indicative of a stall while maneuvering at low altitude.

Scenario #3

The pilot was receiving instruction toward a multiengine rating. The syllabus for the flight included introduction to engine failures on takeoff and initial climb and approaches and landings with an inoperative engine. The airplane was observed climbing at slow rate of speed after takeoff. When the airplane reached 600 to 800 feet AGL it began a left turn, consistent with a return to the airport, followed by a nose-down descent into trees. Examination of the wreckage did not reveal evidence of any preimpact malfunctions. The CFI had accumulated about 111 hours of total multiengine flight experience, all in the same make and model as the accident airplane. He received his CFI rating about 3 weeks prior to the accident and had accumulated about 60 hours of multiengine flight experience as a CFI.

Kick off the discussion of Top 10 Cause #8 with your comments and ideas at mastery.flight.training@cox.net.

Share safer skies. Forward FLYING LESSONS to a friend.

Fly safe, and have fun!

Thomas P. Turner, M.S. Aviation Safety, MCFI
2010 National FAA Safety Team Representative of the Year
2008 FAA Central Region CFI of the Year



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