



## **SAFETYGRAM**

April 2016

The good news about spring is if the weather is terrible today, tomorrow will probably be better. The bad news about spring is if the weather is great today, you better enjoy it today. Every season can have rapidly changing weather conditions, but spring's mood swings always seem the most drastic to me. In addition to weather flip flops at home station, flying cross country this time of year can mean significant temperature changes and crossing several frontal boundaries (with associated turbulence and precipitation hazards). As I always advocate, get a good weather brief, preferably from a human being.

Weather briefs that contain words like "gusting," "turbulence," "wind shear," "frontal passage," "deteriorating visibility/ceilings," "thunderstorms," "icing," etc. should cause you to come up with a mitigation/avoidance strategy. Thunderstorms and icing should always be avoided – period. However some things like gusty winds shouldn't prohibit you from flying (provided they're within limits), but they should cause you to think about how you're going to handle them. Mentally refresh the procedures before you ever step to the aircraft. "What's the max demonstrated crosswind again? What are the AFMAN limits? What are my taxi considerations and flight control positions for winds?" Also, if the weather is forecast to be in flux close to your airborne times, you should always plan a way out in case conditions deteriorate. It always surprises me how fast the winds can pick up, or how fast the ceilings can come down this time of year. Even if the forecast says the weather won't change until well after you land, you still want to have a hip pocket plan. I've seen Mother Nature ignore the forecast times more than once...sometimes you just land early, sometimes you get stuck diverting to a more suitable runway. Either way you should have a plan, and a fall back plan.

Spring also marks the return of THUNDERSTORMS. I used all caps for a reason...that word should always get your attention! Some of the most severe weather we can encounter in aviation is a direct result of thunderstorms. AC 00-6A, Aviation Weather has this to say about thunderstorms. "A thunderstorm packs just about every weather hazard known to aviation into one vicious bundle." These hazards include tornadoes, turbulence, hail, icing, low ceilings, poor visibility, and lightning. Any one of these can be cause for concern while you are flying. If you get into a thunderstorm, you may get to experience many or all of them....at the same time. With that said, what is the best course of action to take when thunderstorms are in the area? AVOID THEM! AC00-6A gives some dos and don'ts for thunderstorm avoidance. They are as follows:

1. Don't land or takeoff into the face of an approaching thunderstorm.
2. Don't attempt to fly under a thunderstorm even if you can see through to the other side.
3. Don't try to circumnavigate thunderstorms covering 6/10 of any area of more either visually or by airborne radar.
4. Don't penetrate a cloud mass containing scattered embedded thunderstorms without airborne radar.
5. DO avoid by at least 20 miles any thunderstorm identified as severe or giving an intense radar echo.
6. Do not attempt to over fly a severe thunderstorm unless you can clear the tops by at least 1000 feet for every 10 knots of wind speed at the cloud top---in my words, "Don't EVER attempt to over fly a thunderstorm, period."
7. Do remember that vivid and frequent lightning indicates a severe thunderstorm.
8. Do regard any thunderstorm with tops 35,000 feet or higher as a severe thunderstorm.

There is never a good reason to get anywhere near a thunderstorm, but there are many reasons to avoid them (self-preservation being the primary!). Let us all keep thunderstorms far

away from our flight paths – the hangar is the best place for our aircraft when thunderstorms are near!

The prospect of changing or challenging weather is not cause to abandon thoughts of spring flying. For me, it's quite the opposite; I'm itching to get back in the air and knock the rust off! However, I have to pay close attention to what I'm doing. I have to recognize the aircraft limits, weather limits, and my own limits. As always, good planning and hazard avoidance decision making (on the ground and in flight) will help keep me safe...so I can continue enjoying the incredible experience of flight!

Blue skies and fair winds!

Tune Up your Flying Skills

[http://insurance.aopa.org/About/news/Articles/2016/March/Springs-Here-Get-Back-to-Flying?utm\\_source=eBrief&utm\\_medium=Content&utm\\_campaign=AOPAIS&utm\\_content=Fly-with-Kids](http://insurance.aopa.org/About/news/Articles/2016/March/Springs-Here-Get-Back-to-Flying?utm_source=eBrief&utm_medium=Content&utm_campaign=AOPAIS&utm_content=Fly-with-Kids)

VFR Flying:

<http://www.flyingmag.com/flying-vfr-offers-greater-freedom-and-flexibility>

Lockheed Martin FSS:

<https://www.1800wxbrief.com/Website/#/>

**FLY SAFELY!**

