



SAFETYGRAM

January 2016

By the time you read this, I'm not sure if all my New Year's resolutions will be broken yet or not. I'll let you know next month. I'm kidding...I don't actually make New Year's resolutions. I've found over the years my motivation to really do something isn't remotely strong enough if it's just driven by a date on the calendar. Instead, I've found real drive to change has to be driven by something else. For me, learning to fly in the Air Force was one of those types of drivers. I think it 'rewired my brain' in many ways.

Here's what I mean by rewired my brain - we spent every morning for a year in pilot training getting grilled on emergency procedures. They would give our class an emergency scenario, then make one of the students stand up and work through the emergency (in great detail). I wish I could tell you that I was good at this from the beginning...but that wouldn't be true. Initially I had a hard time with remembering all the details until I grasped some basic concepts that helped me work through every scenario successfully. None of these things were absolute, but they've proven over and over again to be a good starting point in most situations.

The first thing they had to beat into my head was to always fly the airplane, even when other things were going wrong. I had to remember that first and foremost - always keep the airplane flying, and preferably get it pointed in the direction where I could get it on the ground the soonest. Always fly the aircraft...simple, but sometimes forgotten (with fatal results).

I also had to internalize how to use the aircraft checklists to handle an emergency. Initially I tried to analyze every situation like an engineer and solve it myself. It took me a while to figure out the engineers had already done that for me and created a checklist to remind me of all the stuff I would forget (and avoid unintended consequences). All I had to do was use that emergency procedure checklist and then run the normal descent/landing checklists. Mentally previewing the checklist full of situations and emergencies that *might* happen prepared me to handle the ones that *did* happen! Besides, if I have an accident that's one of the first things they'll attempt to figure out: did I properly follow procedures/checklists? Along those lines, I also learned that any time I referenced an emergency procedures checklist, it was also a good idea to declare an emergency.

Here's a few more generalizations that helped guide me over the years:

- Before you get airborne, keeping a bad aircraft on the ground is generally better than dealing with that same bad aircraft in the air (moving faster and with farther to fall...)
- If you are in the air, keeping a bad aircraft in the air too long is less desirable than getting it on the ground and giving it to a good mechanic. However, rushing that process and forgetting checklist items (gear?) can increase the mechanic's bill...and maybe create doctor bills.

- Overflying a perfectly good airfield with a bad aircraft (or if you're lighter on fuel than you think you should be) is not typically a good decision.
- If you've got a tire or gear problem, landing with the bad tire/gear in the center of the runway and stopping straight ahead is a good idea. Continuing to taxi after that point is usually a bad idea.
- Landing with an emergency may temporarily shut down operations on a portion of that airport. Crashing at an airport will completely shut down operations, and for a lot longer...so landing safely is the most polite option available.
- Trying to salvage a bad landing attempt instead of going around is the equivalent of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. It hurts and it's really hard to explain.
- Aviate, Navigate, Communicate. In that order...always.
- Fly it until the last piece stops moving.
- In the air: Speed is life...don't get slow.
- On the ground: Unless you're running from a burning aircraft, speed kills...don't taxi fast.
- Never let an aircraft take you somewhere your brain didn't get to five minutes earlier.

Here's the last one - there's the old adage that the three most useless things to a pilot are: 1) fuel you didn't put on the aircraft, 2) the runway behind you and, 3) the sky above you. I've found over the years this adage seems to perfectly sum up why preflight planning is so important. If I plan appropriately, I'll always have enough of those three things (on board, in front of me, and below me). Finally, there's an exception to every rule...I just don't want to be that exception because it's usually bad...

Blue skies and fair winds!

Links:

Checklist Use; Gulfstream IV accident study:

<http://blog.aopa.org/opinionleaders/2015/12/07/the-normalization-of-deviance/>

Aviation Quotes:

<http://www.skygod.com/quotes/cliches.html>

<http://wilk4.com/humor/humorm166.htm>

Checklist use by Doctors:

<http://pilot-protection-services.aopa.org/News/2015/December/Checklists?PPS=eBrief.29.DEC.Sackier>

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