



SAFETY GRAM

June 2020

Summer is a great time to fly. Whether you're working on adding a rating or just pursuing your passion for flying, it's always a great time to get in the air. Many people like to do introductory flights for friends and family, or even take a long cross-country trip. Flying with my kids, or other friends, I've learned that doing a quick "ground safety school" prior to flight will pay off.

FAR 91.3 states: "The pilot in command is directly responsible for, and is the final authority as to, the operation of that aircraft." The FARs don't offer a tremendous amount of guidance beyond this; however, as the PIC you are ultimately responsible for the safety of you and your passengers. For those who are completely unfamiliar with GA, many safety basics are foreign to them. Below are things I recommend discussing before leaving home to fly.

1. **Small Kids/Pets:** Both require a great deal of supervision around airplanes. Neither recognizes the propeller as the real hazard that it is. Make sure small kids and/or pets have a responsible adult (familiar with GA ops) with them at all times when they're around airplanes (on the ground and in the air). You as the PIC are probably not the best choice for that duty – you have the business of flight safety to focus on. Finally, if the child/pet does not travel well in a car, consider that they may not travel well in an aircraft either. ****IF YOUR AERO CLUB ALLOWS FLIGHTS WITH PETS****
2. **Ears:** Most people are unaware how loud airplanes are. I highly encourage you to make sure passengers wear hearing protection with ear plugs underneath a headset for small kids. Wearing a headset is also a relatively novel experience for some. Make sure your passengers know how to adjust volume and when they should be quiet on the radio. Lastly, we're familiar with pressure changes as pilots, but make sure your passengers know what to expect and how to communicate with you if they have trouble with pressure in their ears. Carrying a nasal spray decongestant on-board just in case someone has trouble with an ear block is not a bad idea.
3. **Preflight Operations:** Complete your preflight inspection and load any baggage before the passengers arrive. If that's not possible, I recommend letting passengers stay inside (in air conditioning) while you preflight. I've found either way allows complete focus on the preflight and fewer habit pattern disruptions for me. It also gives everyone a final opportunity to use the bathroom before being escorted to the plane. Do not let passengers walk to/from the plane unescorted. Ground movement areas can be very hazardous to those that are unfamiliar.
4. **Inflight Behaviors:** Speaking of bathrooms, our GA aircraft don't have them. That means you'll have to manage everyone's intake of fluids. I always ask passengers use the bathroom before we step to the airplane. You will also want to manage any stops on

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a long cross country so you and passengers can stay hydrated without anyone doing the “bathroom dance”. Also have emergency airports to land let place to land if one of the passengers has an emergency situation.

5. **Emergency Preparedness:** Always have barf bags handy. Some passengers are apprehensive about flying. A quick review of safety equipment before engine start is a great idea. I've found it lets them know you're professional and prepared, rather than just a “fly-by-night” hobbyist. Pointing out the locations of the fire extinguisher, PLB, hand held radio (and how to use it!), first aid kit, etc. is a great idea. It will empower your passengers to care for themselves if you're incapacitated. Of course you're required to discuss and enforce the use of seatbelts and shoulder harnesses, but don't forget to discuss door operation. Many aircraft actually require the right seat passenger to operate the door. Aircraft seatbelts aren't typically too foreign, but the doors often open/close much differently than a car. Having that discussion before you're strapped in and baking in the sun is much less stressful for everyone involved.

Investing ten minutes of time, talking with first-time passengers will set the flight up for success. They are prepared to enjoy their first encounter with aviation. And you, as the pilot, can focus on flying safely.

Lastly, as the Aero Club Manager/Flight Instructor, please continually stress the importance of safety. There is always that ‘life and limb’ issue that should concern them – but beyond that, that just like their auto insurance, Aero Club insurance is based on claim record. A minor ding may not seem like much, but if insurance rates have to go up, rental rates have to go up too – and aircraft are not available to fly when damaged. They all have a vested interest, ask them to help keep the rates low – safety is what it is all about.

CONTINUE TO FLY SAFE!