

Preflighting Your Passengers

A number of GA weather accidents have been associated with external or social pressures, such as the pilot's reluctance to appear "cowardly" or to disappoint passengers eager to make or continue a trip. There is almost always pressure to launch, and pressure to continue. Even the small investment in making the trip to the airport can create pressure to avoid "wasted" time.

For this reason, your weather planning should include preflighting your passengers (and anyone waiting at your destination) as well as your aircraft. If you jointly plan for weather contingencies and brief your passengers before you board the aircraft, you as the pilot will be less vulnerable later on to the pressure to continue in deteriorating weather conditions. Suggestions:

- ✓ **DO** use develop personal minimums that will help you make the toughest go / no-go and continue / divert decisions well in advance of any specific flight.
- ✓ **DO** be aware that the presence of others can influence your decision-making and your willingness to take risks, and let your passengers know up front that safety is your top priority. Share your personal minimums with your passengers and anyone who might be waiting for you at the destination.
- ✓ **DO** establish "weather check" checkpoints every 25-30 nm along the route, at which you will reevaluate conditions. If possible, have your passengers assist by tracking progress and conditions at each weather checkpoint.
- ✓ **DO** use your pre-established personal minimums to determine exactly what conditions will trigger a diversion at any given weather checkpoint. Let your passengers know what these conditions are.
- ✓ **DO** decide specifically what you will do if you have to divert at any particular point, and inform your passengers of these plans. Preflight is the time to make alternative arrangements (e.g., hotel and rental car reservations) in the event that weather conditions worsen. You can always put passengers (or yourself) on an airliner if you absolutely have to return on time.
- ✓ **DO** advise anyone meeting you at your destination that your plans are flexible and that you will call them when you arrive. Be sure that they too understand that safety is your top priority, and that you will delay or divert if weather becomes a problem.
- ✓ **DO** remember that one of the most effective safety tools at your disposal is waiting out bad weather. Bad weather (especially involving weather fronts) normally does not last long, and waiting just a day can often make the difference between a flight with high weather risk and a flight that you can make safely.