

HOW TO FLY/HOW NOT TO FLY

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One feature of this article is a discussion of how to fly a specific portion of a landing pattern in high wind conditions. It is my hope that such discussions will cause you to re-visit this phase of flight and attempt to better understand all factors involved. I would appreciate feed back if you find this to be right, wrong, helpful, or otherwise. I would welcome similar contributions from instructors or experienced pilots; contributions which can benefit many. Much of what has been included in these articles was general in nature. In the future, I hope to concentrate more on specifics of how to fly better.

PREFACE:

Please pardon my repetition; that of re-printing the paragraph below. Whether we want to admit it or not, we as social beings are affected by our surroundings and our peers. While we may be self-proclaimed "rugged individualists", chances are that we are also creatures of our culture to a high degree. Awareness of this can help us understand our own flying behavior and that of our fellow pilots, and the positive or negative role that flying culture can play.

CULTURE

1. **We need to develop a Safety Culture.** Though it seems that we are constantly bombarded with safety warnings and education opportunities by the FAA, EAA, and AOPA, is it really enough? Most of us also have a social engagement associated with our flying. We mingle with our flying friends at the airport, our EAA chapter, and the Saturday-morning-breakfast-bunch. These social contacts are probably our most powerful peer pressure influence. This less formal social side of aviation is the most enjoyable, and probably the most influential. This is our aviation "culture".
2. **"Culture must change"**. A quote by Doug Rozendaal, with regard to improving A-B safety. This is obviously a comment that needs to be qualified. Overall, we have a great culture. We have common interests in flying and building, we help each other in many aspects of building, and we enjoy socializing with each other. But, there are aspects of our flying culture, perhaps holdovers from bygone years, perhaps results of paranoia over our minority status in GA, which are counterproductive to safety. Keep this in mind as you read on.

ANTI-AUTHORITY.

During the FAA Safety meeting in Florida a couple of months ago, one of the panel members suggested that he had noted an anti-authority thread in the A-B community. Not everyone felt the same, and the topic was not further discussed. However, I've thought about it and believe that this sentiment may be more pervasive in the A-B community than elsewhere in GA. I think that homebuilders are more independent and creative than typical pilots. They are willing to put in the effort to do it their own way, and are more resistant to being told what to do. There may be

an element of anti-authority also, and in some instance this can be destructive. Keep that though in mind while reviewing A-B flying safety.

ACCIDENT REDUCTION:

I mentioned before that we (EAA and A-B community) should set a goal of cutting our A-B accident rate in half. (The goal stated by the FAA was much less, something in the order of a 1% per year improvement) I feel that this is achievable because a review of individual accidents shows that almost all of them are preventable. If accidents are not an act of God such as physical incapacitation in flight, being hit from behind, or being struck by lightning, they are preventable. To prevent loss of control accidents, we need to hone our flying skills. To prevent cowboy accidents, we simply must quite doing show-off stunts. To minimize mechanical problems, we need to become better builders and mechanics. As pilots, we must manage mechanical systems (fuel starvation?) better.

OK, easier said than done. What should be our time frame for this goal; one year or five years? One year is probably unrealistically soon; probably unachievable so why try? five years seem so distant that there's no need to rush; lets put off action until later. My suggestion is "ACT NOW". When an opportunity arises, act. By thinking "safety", you'll be surprised how often a need, hopefully an opportunities, to act will arise.

HOW?

1. Constantly assess and upgrade yourself. Regularly practice airwork maneuvers. Practice landings of different types rather than just "arriving". Make it a point to do something educational on every flight. Make Biennial Flight Reviews (BFR) meaningful. Seek out an instructor who will challenge and instruct you, not just sign your logbook.
2. Bring safety into conversations with fellow pilots. Promote an atmosphere of professionalism within your flying peer group, be it EAA Chapter meetings or just the clutch at the airport cafe.
3. Encourage builders who are about to make first flights to get transition training, or at least to upgrade their proficiency.
4. If it is evident that some pilot (s) you know are deficient in flying skills or judgement, network with fellow pilots to find diplomatic means to make that pilot aware of his limitations and the need for more training, practice, etc.
5. If you know of someone about to buy a "previously owned" RV or other homebuilt, do what you can to make that person aware of the availability and benefits of transition training.

The list should be endless. Give it some thought and see what is appropriate for your aviation environment; your EAA Chapter or peer group. Different circumstances will present differing opportunities and needs. I'd like to hear from anyone who has specific experience and ideas of what they feel is needed or what has worked in their area.

EXPERIMENTING

Reducing accidents can be done through reducing risk. Reducing risk is done through eliminating variables and unknowns. Experimenting inherently involves unknowns and variables, thus risk. Our airplanes are licensed EXPERIMENTAL- Amateur Built, and our organization is the EXPERIMENTAL Aircraft Assn. Safety and Experimentation appear to be at cross purposes. From a strict safety perspective it would seem logical to conclude that we should cease experimenting. Or, might safer airplanes be made as a result of experimenting?

In attempting to answer the unanswerable, I'll just suggest that when we builders engage in experimentation we thoroughly research the possible effects and consequences, good and bad, of our intended experiments. Experimentation might involve changes to airframes, engines, engine accessories, fuel systems, etc. Experiment wisely and cautiously. Keep experimentation separate from routine flying. Do not involve others (passengers) in flights where experimentation is in process.

*For a very good and detailed treatment of this topic, please read: "EXPERIMENTAL OPERATIONS? CHOOSE WISELY." by Paul Dye, in the July issue of Kitplanes Magazine.