

Winter Flying

Newsletter December 2011

Nothing beats a cool, clear, crisp day or night for flying and we are often blessed with many of such days in Idaho. This December, (to the angst of the snow lover in me), we have been blessed with an abundance of sunny days for great winter flying. The following is a refresher of the newsletter published in 2009 on Winter Flying considerations.

As we have to do with our home and car, there are some preparations to make, both physical and mental to adjust to the colder weather and winter conditions. If you haven't done so yet, please review the Winter Operations document Jim Eyre published. It includes tips and information on preflight, starting, in-flight safety, and engine operational considerations. It's on the club web page at: <http://www.t-craft.org/siteindex.htm> click on Cold Weather Operations. Also review the October 2011 Newsletter available on our website under the **Newsletter Archive** tab for additional tips Jim has provided.

In addition to Jim E's tips, consider the following for your pre-flight planning, comfort and safety during winter time flights.

Preflight Planning: Obtain a good weather briefing; pay particular attention to freezing levels, icing, fog, and mountain obscuration Airmets. Be aware of changing weather conditions and get enroute updates. Check NOTAMS and call your destination airport(s) for updates on runway and ramp conditions. If an overnight stay is planned, look for a heated hanger you can rent, or at least bring your plane for de-icing/de-frosting if needed. Plan a route to maximize safe landing opportunities in case of an emergency, and always have an out. File a flight plan (with the FAA or someone who will know your route and ETA) and stick to your plan.

Comfort: Dress warmly, carry blankets for rear seat passengers, you can always peel off those layers and stow in the aircraft. Bring some fluids to keep hydrated.

Survival: Winterize your Survival bag. Keep extra layers of clothing and blankets in the unlikely event of an off-airport landing. Have a pair of gloves in your flight bag for preflight and fueling. Have basic first aid supplies, flares, matches, strobe lights, and a signaling mirror. Basic shelter can be created using the fuselage and plant material. Know how to build a snow cave if needed.

Emergency Communications: Consider purchasing a SPOT tracker or Emergency Personal Locator Beacon. A VHF handheld transceiver could be helpful to reach overhead aircraft for assistance. Bring a cell phone, which may work in some locations.

Aircraft Pre-Flight: Be sure all frost & ice are removed from the aircraft especially flight control surfaces. Check tires and struts: Cold temperatures cause pressure in tires and struts to decrease. If struts are low, they will need to be serviced by a mechanic. Check that Pitot tube heat is working. Be careful, it does get hot to the touch.

Taxing: Be watchful for snow and ice patches. Brake cautiously when taxiing, taking off, and landing. In areas with lots of snow, be careful of snow banks which may catch a wing inadvertently. Brake Easy: Plan on minimum brake usage when landing and when taxiing through snow. Warm brakes melt any snow upon stopping and then refreezes, locking the plane in position.

Run-up: Check to make sure that cabin heat works - be sure that cabin heat does not introduce exhaust gases into the cockpit due to a leaking heat exchanger, introducing of carbon monoxide into the cabin. Locate and frequently check the CO detector coupons during the flight. The spot on the detector will turn gray/black when CO is in the air. If you or your passengers start getting drowsy, sick or a headache, get some fresh air, it could be CO poisoning.

En-route Flight Conditions: Monitor outside air temps regularly, especially if you start picking up any moisture. Avoid icing conditions by all means, and, if you pick up ice unexpectedly, exit icing conditions as soon as possible.

Carb Icing: Recognize a higher potential for carb icing and use carb heat as necessary. Plan on using it earlier than manufacturers recommendations and often. Test your carb heat during run-up at high and lowest RPM settings.

Fuel: Bring lots of it – more fuel equals more options. Be it climbing above clouds, or steering around a storm, you'll be glad to have it.

Cross Wind: Adjust your cross wind approach to final to the current conditions. A commonly used rule of thumb is cut your max crosswind component in half for a snowy runway, and cut it by 75% for hard packed snow or ice on the runway.

Local Considerations: Snow removal at Nampa and similar airports can be spotty, especially on the taxiways. Make sure taxiways are clear of most snow and don't attempt to "plow" through deep snow and/or slush. A Prop-strike in snow, ice, or slush is considered the same as a prop striking water or the ground, and will require an engine teardown, i.e. very expensive.

The north side of our hanger gets little sun, and patches of ice persist for some time, which can make it extremely difficult to get planes in and out of the hanger, especially if you are by yourself. Be careful that you or your passengers don't slip and fall on the ice or snow.

Are you night current? If not, getting night current would be a good way to burn your use-it-or-lose-it hour, and a night flight is a good way to check out the Christmas and city lights. Night currency requires a minimum of three landings to a full stop, one hour after sunset, within the past 90 days before you can take passengers.

Winter Flying can be just as much fun as in the summer, but it takes a little more preparation, planning, and a willingness to postpone trips because of inclement weather.

Additional tips and considerations can be found on AOPA's article on Winter Flying at:
<http://www.aopa.org/members/files/topics/winterfly.html>

Fly Smart, Fly Safe and Have Fun,
Jim Hudson

Membership: We currently are at 73 members.

New Members: Please welcome the following new members who joined us this month.

Doug Case – Doug is returning to flying to enjoy the friendly skies after several years absence.

Scott Cagle – Scott is working towards his Recreational Pilot Certificate.

New Pilot Ratings this Month:

Congratulations Ben Maxwell – Earning his Private Pilot Certificate

Training/Events:

January 17th 7:00 PM –T-Craft Hanger: AOPA “Null Report” Accident Statistics Review

February – Date TBD: 0YD Accident Review