

Elmendorf Aero Club

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PIF 09 - 08

Unintentional Mistakes And The Consequences Of Them

6 Jul 2009

This PIF concerns the area of “*Unintentional Mistakes*” and the many “*Consequences*” that can result from the event and chain of events of these mistakes.

Often, mistakes are made while performing tasks required for proper flight preparation. As aforementioned at many Safety Meetings, a pilot should take into account the sequence time that is required to properly prepare for a flight. Most mistakes occur as a result of either complacency or being in a hurry and not paying attention to detail.

When a pilot becomes complacent, they are most likely to make mistakes that come about during what they would *perceive* as a normal operation or function. When in fact, a variable has been introduced which will change the outcome of the process. As a result of “Complacency” the pilot will continue on with their process as they had done many times before, however, that pilot is about to make a mistake that will not be caught until the action has been completed. These types of mistakes can span the spectrum from minor, no major factor, to major resulting in violations, accidents, and even fatality.

When a pilot is in a hurry to complete a process, they are most likely to have the mistakes made as a result of *bypassing or mentally accomplishing* a step in the process. The pilot’s mind is on the end goal and not on the task at hand, which renders steps unaccomplished and as a result beginning the chain of events that will lead to a mistake and in turn a possible mishap.

As the pilot in command you are responsible for the actions and reactions of all decisions made during your flight preparation and activity. These decisions must take place in real time and not as a result of being in a hurry, or complacent.

In the Safety Gram (story) scenario, the PIC should have asked the passenger at the end of the flight, “whatever happened to the fluid that you dispensed” at which time the half full oil container would have been identified and properly disposed of.

This event had a happy or to say a non-eventful ending, it could have been far more catastrophic.

Flight Safety “Make It First, , , Make It Last”

**This PIF is to be in effect until 30 July 2010 or until
contained dated material has expired**



SAFETYGRAM

Jul 2009



Even though regulations are changed and updated often, we pilots are still notorious for making decisions with outcomes that range from stupid to dangerous. Here's a story I heard this week...just in time to give me a whimsical yet educational story for this month's SafetyGram.

There's no Aero Club in San Antonio, so I rent from local FBOs. This week I rented a light twin and hired the help of one of their instructors. I did the preflight and when the instructor met me I told him the airplane had no spare oil. Not a big deal today, but usually there's a couple of spare quarts kept in the back. He told me all the oil bottles were removed from the airplanes because of an incident.

It's been very hot here in San Antonio, so drinking plenty of fluids is key to survival. During one training flight (most are with one instructor and two students) one of the students drank all he could and needed to let some of the excess liquid out of his system. Decision #1...Do I tell the instructor to stop the airplane, or should I use this half empty oil bottle in the back of the airplane? Being the efficient aviator (and a student) you know what he decided.

After feeling much relief, and completing his sortie, he made another bad decision and left the bottle in the airplane. Did he purposefully decide to leave the bottle in the airplane? Or did he simply forget about it after the flight? I'm not sure, but bad decision either way.

Guess what was discovered on the next sortie with that airplane? That's right...the oil was low. The diligent student simply added some fresh oil, with its unauthorized additive, to the engine. To be honest, I'm not exactly sure when it was discovered, but I was told they weren't aware of what occurred until after the flight concluded. Fortunately there were no injuries, and I haven't heard about any damage yet.

Every action you take has a consequence. Some are desired, some are not. We as pilots have a variety of ways to ensure we get the desired consequence from our action; regulations and operating techniques are the primary ways. I would even venture to say a great number of our regulations were developed because a pilot (or controller, or maintainer) took an action which caused an undesired consequence. However, not everything we do is regulated, and as pilots we are constantly training for making decisions that aren't always in black and white. Whether you are taking off in marginal weather, or considering landing because of physiological needs, please think through your decisions, and the consequences of your actions, to you, your passengers, and fellow pilots.

Fly Safe!



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