



FIVE TIPS: A CONSENSUS VIEW OF AERIAL CHASERS

While most of us have no business flirting with a the red stuff, some “lucky” pilots are paid for getting up close and personal with violent weather for news-gathering, research and other purposes. Some tips gleaned from their experience include:

- **Remain in clear air at all times; what you don't see will hurt you and, besides, you can't photograph what you can't see.**
- **The best position for an aircraft relative to a tornadic storm is at about 2000 feet agl and 90 deg. off the tornado's track while remaining ahead of the rain-free base.**
- **Be prepared to move off at the instant a storm cell or rotation changes direction toward you.**
- **Resist trying to circle a storm's rotation unless you can be sure of remaining in clear air and outside the hail veil that usually advances ahead of a tornado.**
- **Be vigilant to avoid debris and remember to manage your airspeed during any encounters with the storm's turbulence.**

We can draw on their experience by adopting some simple rules when flying violent weather:

- Stay visual. Remaining clear of clouds—unless you absolutely, positively know you won't be in them long and can see what's on the other side—is Job One.
- The best escape maneuver can be whatever puts you at a right angle to the storm's movement. Otherwise, the standard, level, 180-deg. turn is your new best friend.
- In many instances, flight visibility within 2-3000 feet of the surface is better than at higher altitudes. But don't let terrain force you into bad choices.
- Be aware of what the wind is doing relative to the storm's movement and try to use it to your advantage.
- Fly the aircraft.