

PANEL PLACEMENT

If life throws a dark glass panel your way, it's very helpful if the backup instruments are located where you can use them easily. In my opinion as a CFII, some manufacturers have done a better job at backup instrument placement than have others.

Cirrus, for instance, puts its three backup gauges on the pilot's subpanel. This placement is close to optimum, unless the pilot bobs his/her head up and down trying to incorporate the standbys in a scan of other cockpit displays—head-bobbing motion can be disorienting.

Diamond's standbys are in the top, center of the panel, and Cessna's Independence, Kan., singles have them in the center bottom. Both probably were placed there with a dual mission in mind, with the gauges equally visible from either seat. In practice it would be a little awkward (but doable) to fly by the gauges in this position, but hard if trying to include other indications (like navigation instruments) in the scan.

Most challenging, in my opinion, would be use of the backup gauges in Mooneys and Beech Bonanza/Barons, installed about as far away from the pilot as possible, on the far right side of the panel. The Columbia/Cessna Corvalis placement of standby instruments down the center of the panel, and Piper Aircraft's backup instrument placement, in a vertical strip just to the left or the right of the PFD, depending on model, are probably the best overall location in terms of being able to include a round-gauge presentation into a nearly normal scan.

Your opinion may vary. Regardless, you'll have to work with what you've got, unless you own the airplane and invest a fairly significant sum to relocate backup instrumentation. Your better investment would be to include an hour or two of simulated partial-panel flight with an instrument instructor or a qualified safety pilot every few months, to develop and then maintain your partial-panel flying skills for the unlikely event of a PFD failure on a dark night or in IMC



Placement of backup instruments varies from manufacturer to manufacturer. Top, Diamond's DA40 is pictured, with the three backups mounted top-center of the panel. The middle photo, of a Cessna 182, shows them centered above the engine controls. At bottom, a Piper Matrix's panel is shown, with the backup gauges on the far left.