



## A Little Help?

Armed with only a non-turbocharged engine and a warm pitot tube, almost any kind of flight from the Pacific Northwest to points south or east depends on finding an ice-free route at an altitude the airplane can sustain. Climbing to that altitude without either icing up or encountering inhospitable terrain is only part of the challenge.

Of course, other departure points and times may pose different challenges: lengthy overwater routes, airspace, low IFR (without icing), night over mountains in a single, etc. Risk management in general aviation is all about recognizing threats to a safe, benign and successful flight posed by equipment, weather, time of day and pilot abilities. Some tools you can use to help make the decisions:

### **ANOTHER PILOT/FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR**

It's always helpful to get another pilot's opinion on evaluating a risk. It's especially helpful if the pilot knows you, your airplane and the combination's abilities. It also helps if he/she knows the terrain. Don't be bashful asking for opinions and suggestions: The other pilot likely will be flattered, especially if you heed the advice.

### **FLIGHT SERVICE**

Most pilots get their weather briefings from an automated source other than Flight Service. While a specialist's local knowledge may be non-existent when compared with only 20 years ago, you might get lucky and speak with an experienced briefer who has a good grasp of the strategic weather situation, including divert and alternate airports with decent weather. Redial is your friend.

### **ATC**

Once you're airborne, controllers usually have a firm handle on what's going on with the weather, airspace and traffic information you may need to make an intelligent decision. When we've needed a little extra information before departing, a phone call to the local Tracon has worked wonders.

### **SAFETY PILOT**

We all like to think we can handle things ourselves, but you wouldn't be looking for more information and advice if you didn't have doubts. In addition to consulting pilots/CFIs, think about bringing along a more experienced pilot or flight instructor. It might not be free, but have you looked at repair-shop and medical care prices lately?

### **SLOW DOWN**

When confronted with the kinds of schedule pressures family and job can create, it's easy to rush through flight planning or the go/no-go decision. Take a deep breath, ignore the clock and use all the time you need.