



Fear Of Flying?

Whenever we find ourselves out of the cockpit for a time, getting back in can be humbling. Simply put, there can be a lot going on for even a local flight on a good-weather day. Throw in challenging weather, unfamiliar airspace and a busy ATC facility, and the opportunities for embarrassment—if not something more serious—grow exponentially. The difference between current and proficient can mean merely a busy flight or one that leaves you wringing with sweat at its conclusion.

When a pilot says he or she is current, the implication is that the various minimum legal requirements to serve as pilot in command (PIC) are met. This varies according to the operation, but includes appropriate ratings and certificates, and sufficient recent experience to serve as PIC given the conditions under which the flight will be operated (VFR/IFR, day/night, etc.) Problems arise when we presume being legal for a planned flight means it can be accomplished proficiently.

Each pilot must assess his or her own (recent and total) experience and preparedness for a planned flight. Most of the time, this is internalized by asking ourselves how we'll handle Scenarios A through Z. Too infrequently will we ask ourselves if one of more of the scenarios scare us. When we do ask ourselves such a question, the answer should be a resounding "No!" If it isn't, then we need to perform some additional introspection to determine what about the proposed flight presents uncertainty and then take steps to mitigate.

Another way to look at is this: When the flight is concluded, will we be happy and content we met all the challenges it posed, or will we be rationalizing our performance and promising ourselves we'll get some additional training or experience before doing that again? Which would you prefer? —J.B.