What Did You Just Do? Don't Do That!

Too often, some task a pilot performs routinely goes awry. This usually occurs because we're either not paying attention to what we're doing, we perform the task incorrectly or at the wrong time. A classic example is switching fuel tanks only to hear the sounds of silence a few moments later. Obviously, we just switched to a tank without usable fuel in it, or turned the selector to the off position. Don't do that.

Hitting the reset button can be as simple as undoing something you did a few moments before. The problem? In the heat of the moment, we often can forget what we just did, bypassing something obvious in our troubleshooting process.

The takeaway here should be that tasks like changing tanks or putting down the gear aren't complete until we've verified the results. An engine that continues to run five minutes or so after we switched tanks, or seeing three green landing-gear indicator lights, is verification we performed the task correctly and that the airplane responded as expected.

Any time we reconfigure a system also is a good time for us to do it incorrectly, or for it to fail. The task isn't complete until we've verified we performed the task correctly and the affected system responded as expected. If the airplane's response isn't what we wanted or expected, reversing that recent task often solves the problem.

Don't forget what you just did, and be prepared to reverse your action immediately if things don't work out as expected.