

S*A*F*E*T*Y

A GA Pilot's Guide to the Passenger Briefing

You are no doubt familiar with the passenger briefings you hear on airliners, and you know that the regulations — 14 CFR section 91.107 — require you to brief your passengers on how to fasten and unfasten seat belts and (if installed) safety harnesses. That's important, but have you ever stopped to think about what else the passenger briefing in a general aviation aircraft should include? Here's a passenger briefing checklist literally built on S*A*F*E*T*Y:

Seatbelts

Regulations give the pilot in command (PIC) two specific tasks with regard to seatbelts and shoulder harnesses. The first is to brief passengers on how the seatbelts work. The second is to notify passengers when seatbelts must be fastened.

It is also a good idea to explain how to adjust and lock the seat position. This discussion is especially important for the passenger in the right front seat. Imagine how startling (not to mention dangerous) it would be if an un-briefed and unsecured passenger reacted to sudden rearward seat travel by instinctively grabbing the yoke.

Air

Show passengers where the air vents are located, and tell them how to open and close overhead and/or floor-level vents in their seating area. Just a note: unless they have some experience in GA aircraft, it may be best for them to let you make the adjustment.

The subject of air brings up a more delicate issue — airsickness. Some pilots advocate a full briefing on the location of airsickness bags. Others believe that triggers the power of suggestion in potentially queasy passengers. If you are in the "don't tell" group, instruct passengers to tell you right away if they feel uncomfortable for any reason.

Fire Extinguisher

A well-briefed passenger could be very helpful if you find yourself fighting flames during any part of the flight. If you have a fire extinguisher on board — you do, right? — show passengers where it is located, how to unlatch it, and how to use it in the event of a fire.

Exit, Emergencies, & Equipment

Before you talk about exit procedures, show your passengers how to properly secure the door(s) — no one needs the distraction of a door opening in flight. *Then* talk about how to open the door(s) in the event of

an emergency evacuation. If your aircraft has doors on both sides of the fuselage, plan and brief which of the front seats should initially remain forward so rear seat passengers can evacuate. Finally, designate a gathering point once evacuation is complete.

Point out survival equipment, and consider designating someone to be in charge of carrying it out of the aircraft if safety permits. Finally, be sure to explain any equipment, such as supplemental oxygen, that passengers are expected to use during the flight.

Traffic & Talking

Brief passengers to speak up whenever they spot other aircraft. A simple "airplane on the right" will suffice, but consider teaching them to give you traffic information in terms of the "o'clock" positions used by ATC. The advantage of this option is that passengers listening to ATC communications will have a better idea where to look when you get a traffic call.

Expectations for communications — talking — is another good topic to include in your passenger briefing. Passengers may not readily understand the term "sterile cockpit," but they will certainly understand that there are times when you need to focus fully on flying. Let passengers know they should not attempt to talk to you (except for traffic point-outs) during busier phases of the flight.

Your Questions

It is both professional and polite to give passengers an opportunity to ask questions about any part of the flight. Since some passengers may be intimidated by the novelty of GA flying or embarrassed to ask "dumb" questions, watch for any signs of confusion or concern. Make a special effort to invite questions needed to clarify any part of the briefing they did not understand. Remember that the question time is a great opportunity to reassure a reluctant rider, or to encourage a potential future pilot's interest in aviation.

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