

S-A-F-E-T-Y Briefing

You are undoubtedly familiar with the passenger safety briefing that flight attendants provide on commercial airliners. Did you know that the FAA also requires private pilots to ensure that their passengers get a pre-takeoff safety briefing? If you are a right-seat passenger looking for ways to get more involved in GA flight activities, here's a checklist you can run on the pilot's behalf.

Seatbelts

The regulations give the pilot in command (PIC) two specific tasks with regard to seat belts and shoulder harnesses. First, the PIC must ensure that each person on board is briefed on how to fasten and unfasten that person's seat belt and, if installed, shoulder harness.

Second is a duty to notify passengers that seat belts must be fastened before the pilot can legally take off, land, or "cause (an aircraft) to be moved on the surface."

It is also a good idea to brief your passengers on how to adjust and lock each seat into position.

Air

The second major item is environmental controls. Show all 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. Many GA airplanes have other environmental controls (e.g., cabin heat) located somewhere on the instrument panel. If passengers are airplane-savvy, show them how to adjust some or all of these controls. Unless passenger have some experience in GA aircraft, though, it may be best to tell them to let you know if they need you to make adjustments.

The subject of air brings up a more delicate issue — airsickness. Opinions differ widely on whether, and how, to discuss this topic. Some advocate a direct approach, including a full briefing on location and use of airsickness bags. Others believe that a specific briefing triggers the power of suggestion in potentially queasy passengers, and prefer to avoid the subject entirely. You be the judge, but at a minimum you want passengers to tell you right away if they feel uncomfortable.

Fire Extinguisher

If you have a fire extinguisher on board — you do, right? — show all passengers where it is located, how to unlatch it from its mount, and how to use it in the unlikely event of a fire.

Equipment

Make sure all passengers know how to open the door(s) in the event of an emergency evacuation, but it is also important for them to know how to properly secure the door(s). Be sure to explain any equipment,

such as supplemental oxygen, that passengers are expected to use during the flight.

For emergency preparation purposes, develop and brief exit procedures. This step is especially important in airplanes with doors on both sides of the fuselage. For example, your plan might call for keeping the left (pilot) seat forward to allow rear seat passengers to exit via the left door, with front seat occupants exiting via the right. Designate a post-exit gathering point and, if you carry survival equipment, make sure everyone knows where it is stowed.

Traffic and Talking

It never hurts to have extra eyes scanning for traffic, so brief passengers to speak up whenever they spot other aircraft. A simple "airplane on the right" will suffice, but you might teach them to give you traffic information in terms of the "o'clock" positions used by ATC.

Expectations for communications — *talking* — is another good topic to include. Passengers will certainly understand that there are times when the pilot needs to focus fully on flying. Let passengers know that they should not attempt to talk to the pilot (except for traffic point-outs) during the busy takeoff/ climb and approach/landing phases of the flight. Passengers should also minimize their own conversations during these times.

Your Questions?

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 those questions needed to clarify any part of the briefing they did not understand. The question time is a great opportunity to reassure a reluctant rider, or to encourage a potential future pilot's interest in aviation.

Checklist complete!

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Learn More

For a more detailed version of this approach to the passenger safety briefing, see page 8 January/February 2007 issue of *FAA Aviation News* which can be found here: http://www.faa.gov/news/safety_briefing/2007/media/JanFeb2007.pdf