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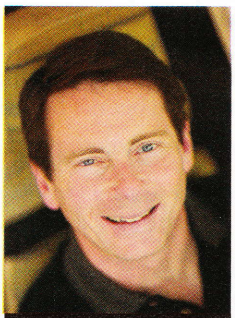
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Tools for wisdom

In reviewing accident reports I'm often frustrated by the repeating patterns. Some accident trends are skill-related—crosswind landing accidents, for example. But too many are wisdom-related. In other words, the perpetrators, who sometimes pay with their lives, lack wisdom. For whatever reason, the people who attempt stupid low-level maneuvers, run out of fuel, or dip below decision altitude on an instrument approach lack the wisdom to understand the risk they are taking on.



Editor in Chief Tom Haines has been striving for wisdom since he began flying 34 years ago.

Undoubtedly, some people simply are not trainable. No matter how much education, training, and mentoring is made available, they will either not take advantage of it or they are unwilling to learn. Fortunately, the masses pick up enough to get by and fly happily and safely for many years.

Still, the process of moving from greenhorn to sage is long and tedious in general aviation. The GA cockpit can be a lonely place the first time a pilot faces a new situation—the first low IMC approach, a particularly demanding crosswind, a partial-panel situation in weather.

The airlines and the military do a better job of assuring knowledge transfer from seasoned pilots to newbies, but through sometimes arduous processes. New airline co-pilots fly with experienced captains. Even experienced pilots have a lot of oversight when flying into an airport they've not been to before. But even that doesn't always work. I've talked to regional airline pilots who flew mostly in the dry and warm Southwest but were transferred to the left seat of airliners in the Northeast without ever having seen ice on the airplane—or without much experience using weather radar. Imagine how they'll do the first time they stare down an embedded thunderstorm over central Pennsylvania or pick their way through ice-laden clouds in the lee of the Great Lakes. If only we could bundle the knowledge and decision-making capabilities of experienced pilots and port it into the brains of those less experienced. To date, there's no app for that, but some guiding principles created by a host of sages is a step in the right direction.

The Aviators Model Code of Conduct succinctly brings together the knowledge of an experienced group of aviators. The group has published codes of conduct for many aviation participants, including seaplane pilots, light sport pilots, glider pilots, students, and mechanics. The newest code is for flight instructors, published this spring. The codes are meant to be living documents, updated as aviation changes. The development and stewardship of the codes is overseen by a permanent editorial board of eight experts representing a cross section of aviation. However, the codes reflect the input and advice from dozens of aviation luminaries.

The Aviators Model Code of Conduct bills itself as "a vision of excellence for aviators." The code has seven sections, each containing principles and sample recommended practices. The sections cover the general responsibilities of aviators, advice on dealing with passengers and people on the surface, training and proficiency, security, environmental issues, use of technology, and advancement and promotion of general aviation.

The principles under general responsibilities for aviators, for example, include: make safety the number one priority; seek excellence in airmanship; develop and exercise good judgment and apply sound principles of aeronautical decision-making; recognize and manage risks effectively; maintain situational awareness, and adhere to prudent operating practices and personal operating parameters (e.g., minimums); aspire to professionalism; act with responsibility and courtesy; and adhere to applicable laws and regulations.

A code of conduct in and of itself, of course, will never prevent an accident—unless the code causes a pilot to take a positive action that he otherwise might not. What if, for example, the pilot who attempted to roll his Beech Baron with a load of passengers had thought about prudent operating practices; aspiring to professionalism; and, of course, adherence to applicable laws and regulations? Might he and his four passengers still be alive to enjoy another day of flying?

As with risk management checklists and other such devices, the Aviators Model Code of Conduct is not a panacea, but it is a thoughtfully produced document that helps pilots build a framework for safe and enjoyable flying. Download your own copy (www.securav.com). With a bit of reflection, you'll quickly see how it will improve your aviation experience. AOPA

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Benefits of the Code of Conduct ***(www.securav.com)***

The Code of Conduct benefits pilots and the GA community by:

- **Highlighting important practices to make pilots better, safer aviators.**
- **Promoting improved pilot training, better airmanship, appropriate pilot conduct, personal responsibility, and pilot contributions to the GA community and society at large.**
- **Encouraging the development and adoption of good judgment and ethical behavior.**
- **Advancing self-regulation through the GA community as an alternative to government regulation.**
- **Promoting GA and making flying a more rewarding experience.**