

Cessna Pilots Association



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What is Recurrent Training?



By Chuck McGill

Proficiency, rather than hours logged, is a primary and essential ingredient in air safety. Many pilots seem to view recurrent training as a specific mandated training requirement such as a Flight Review (FAR 61.56), or the Instrument Proficiency Check (FAR 61.57d), and that is the only training they perform after receiving their last rating.

Routine flights do not prepare a pilot for unusual situations, whether they are unexpected crosswinds or systems/engine anomalies. Professional pilots receive regular recurrent training to include emergency procedures whether they fly as an astronaut, an airline pilot, a military pilot, a law enforcement pilot, an EMS, charter or corporate pilot. Some of their training is FAA mandated, some company mandated, and some is pilot requested. Professional pilots emphasize, and statistics show, demanding recurrent training is a vital factor in safe aircraft operations.

The professional pilots' periodic training is required to enhance their aviation knowledge and skills, train on new equipment or avionics, learn new and revised regulations and procedures, and ensure a certain level of proficiency is present. Most of these pilots receive training at least once every six months, certainly not at the twenty-four month interval allowed for a Flight Review.

Statistics affirm that the lowest fatal accident rate is coincident with those pilots undergoing regular recurrent training programs. If recurrent training is important to those who fly regularly, it makes sense that it is even more critical for those who don't. How much has your skill level deteriorated since you received your last rating or even the last time you flew? How does the combination of lack of proficiency in the aircraft with its avionics combined with uncertainty, fatigue, and emotional pressure weigh on the infrequent

pilot? Acknowledging your own proficiency and knowledge limitations is as important as understanding the systems and limitations of your aircraft.

History has repeatedly shown that an accident is rarely a single overwhelming event but often a series of seemingly benign occurrences prior to or during the flight that conclude with a devastating end. This is the "chain of events" that the pilot just does not see because their proficiency level is so low.

Recurrent training can pay dividends for pilots by enhancing their knowledge, increasing their proficiency, reaffirming their confidence and, moreover, because a positive flight outcome can be more reasonably assured.

Schedule a recurrent training session at least once a quarter with a flight instructor that is knowledgeable and experienced in your aircraft and with your avionics, so that you can keep your aviation knowledge and aeronautical skills at a level you can feel good about before you next take your family, friends, or business associates on a flight.

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