

Thomas P. Turner's Mastery of Flight™

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FLYING LESSONS for December 12, 2024

FLYING LESSONS uses recent mishap reports to consider what *might* have contributed to accidents, so you can make better decisions if you face similar circumstances. In most cases design characteristics of a specific airplane have little direct bearing on the possible causes of aircraft accidents—but knowing how your airplane's systems respond can make the difference in your success as the scenario unfolds. So apply these FLYING LESSONS to the specific airplane you fly. Verify all technical information before applying it to your aircraft or operation, with manufacturers' data and recommendations taking precedence. **You are pilot in command and are ultimately responsible for the decisions you make.**

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This week's LESSONS:

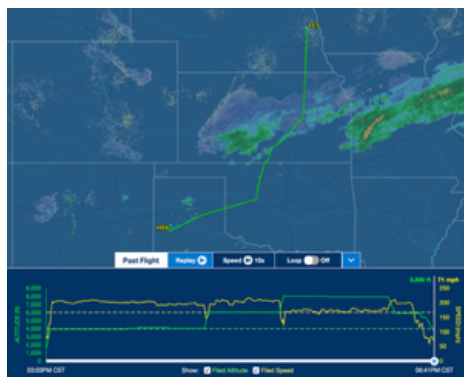
Last week in [Planes, Train\[ing\] and Automobiles](#) I described the preflight and inflight decisions I made that led to a safe and successful Thanksgiving weekend flight. Reader Kynan Sturgess kindly offered his experience that same week to provide this week's LESSONS.

See <https://thomaspturner.com/flying-lessons-weekly/flying-lessons-for-december-5-2024/>

Thank you for sharing your trip over Thanksgiving. I had a very similar experience on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. I had been traveling for work in eastern Nebraska earlier in the week. My weather situation was just opposite of yours having to fly low for the first half or more of the trip, then climbing up high. I had called a couple of other IFR rated pilot friends and devised a plan to possibly get home with the notion that there were lots of places to stop and stay the night if needed.

I fly a 1966 [Beech] Debonair with a nicely upgraded panel, and similar to you I have Sirius/XM weather available on my iPad through a Garmin GDL52.

There were similar icing AIRMETs, so I knew I had to remain clear of the clouds. This involved many deviations to the south, but was eventually able to climb some as I found the southern edge of the front that I was passing through. After passing the front, for the most part as I traveled further south the OAT [outside air temperature] continued to increase.



I ended up entering the clouds on the southern edge of the front at an OAT of 35°F. I decided to watch the wings, elevator and OAT probe like a hawk and request a descent if I detected any accumulation of ice. I never detected any ice despite the OAT dropping to 32°F. After flying in those conditions for about 20 minutes, I briefly detected clearing above me, so I requested 8000 MSL. After climbing 100 feet, I entered clear skies. As I looked behind me, the skies had been clear above me for at least 50 miles.

I really felt like an idiot when I realized that I could have just climbed a little higher to exit the clouds. In retrospect, I had noticed a King Air that had climbed through the same layer that I had been in and then stayed at roughly 10,000 ft MSL which I

thought was odd. I should have asked ATC for cloud tops in the area. They could have reached out to the King Air to get a report.

Live and learn. Thanks for your newsletter.

I have had similar experiences in which, had I made only a small change, I would have drastically reduced my stress level and the risks I was choosing to take. You're right, asking Air Traffic Control to query nearby aircraft for a Pilot Report is an option not often taken. I should do that more myself. Thank you, Kynan.

Readers, do you have similar experiences to share?

Questions? Comments? Supportable opinions? Let us know at mastery.flight.training@cox.net.



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Debrief

Readers write about previous *LESSONS*

Reader Peter Gottlieb also comments on last week's report:

My experience flying in the northeast is that I frequently talk to ATC about VFR aircraft when it is definitely IMC and in some cases solid IMC. Perhaps with modern autopilots these VFR pilots feel they can "get away with it" ignoring traffic implications or what happens if the autopilot trips offline.

I think you're right. This would be an interesting study: does inadvertent (or intentional) visual-rules flight into instrument meteorological conditions involve fewer Loss of Control in Flight (LOC-I) spirals and spins and more Controlled Flight into Terrain (CFIT) accidents in the modern, autopilot era? Or has the total rate of VFR into IMC crashes decreased, suggesting either (1) pilots have been better about avoiding this trap, or (2) as you suspect, pilots have been "getting away with it," presumably by using a more widely available autopilot to avoid LOC-I? Thank you, Peter.

Reader/instructor Darren Gaines addressed a comment I made in a recent [webinar I gave for EAA on IFR Departures](#):

I always enjoy your webinars and always learn something. Last night I tuned-in for the EAA program regarding IFR Departures. I did pick up on something you mentioned that I might be able to provide some additional guidance. Paraphrasing, as I can't remember the specific context, but it was remarked that MVA [Minimum Vectoring Altitude] charts aren't available to the public...or something along those lines.

MVA data is actually available via the FAA Air Traffic, Aeronautical Information Services portal. Every terminal radar facility is posted.

Check out this link:

https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/flight_info/aeronav/digital_products/mva_mia/mva/

If you look at the ICT [Wichita, Kansas] data, you will see two entries. Look at the PDF and disregard the xml files. There are dual entries based on which ATC radar sensor is being used by the facility (a pilot would not know which sensor is being used). Then, comparing the MVA

Charts for each entry, there are some differences, most prominently to the Northwest of the airspace (MVA chart oriented north at the top, of course). The primary airport "generally" is situated in the center of the chart as it is in this example for ICT. As you are based in the ICT terminal area, you can probably identify the obstructions that are the controlling obstacles for a specific MVA area.

Granted, the charts are not very useful for on-the-fly, short notice assistance, but if a pilot desires to become intimately familiar with their local airspace and want to know what the controller uses, this can be informative.

Anyway, my apologies if you already know this stuff and just didn't want to get into it with the audience. I wouldn't expect anybody other than us safety nerds to give it a second thought.

Thanks, Darren. I should've known the MVA data are more readily available in the internet age. I'll look for it.

Reader Barry brown adds:

My sincere thanks for the excellent informative webinar on Departure Procedures. As a long time CFI, CFII, MEI and retired Collins Avionics transportation and engineering flight test pilot, I have found that **many pilots, at all levels of experience, don't have a good understanding of the various DP options available.** Further, how to find the specifics of the different types, how to determine climb gradients for their aircraft vs the charted requirements and other aspects are not commonly understood by many. In retirement, I have been teaching at the beautiful small nearby MXO airport in a variety of SE and ME aircraft. In doing so, the DPE that I send my instrument rating applicants to has expressed his concerns about the lack of knowledge of DPs that he sees in applicants from a variety of training providers. His comments have motivated me to share such information with my instrument students and "rated" pilots during IPCs and proficiency training events.

I noticed an icon during your webinar that indicated that your presentation was being recorded. I did some searching on the [FAASafety.gov](https://www.faa.gov) site however I couldn't locate anything under the webinar title or your name. If it was recorded, can you direct me to where I might find it to share with my clients?

The presentation is now archived on the EAA website [here](#). Thanks for putting it to good use.

See <https://www.eaa.org/videos/6364996508112>

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NEW THIS WEEK: Arthur Utay



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