

Thomas P. Turner's Mastery of Flight™

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FLYING LESSONS for April 10, 2025

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:

Quite a few new readers subscribed this week, many as a result of a "plug" for *FLYING LESSONS Weekly* by reader and well-known instructor Max Trescott in his outstanding [Aviation News Talk podcast this week](#). Welcome aboard, everyone. For those just joining the conversation and as a reminder to all readers, you'll find past [LESSONS in the website archives here](#). And for the folks looking for the [Beech Weekly Accident Update, you'll find it here](#), which is also linked at each direct transmission of *FLW*. Max is an aviation safety kindred spirit. I subscribe to [Aviation News Talk](#) and recommend you check it out too. I especially like Max's in-depth discussion of aviation safety and accident analysis, and often first-person accounts of events that teach us all.

Meanwhile, reader response to [last week's LESSONS](#) was plentiful and great, so let's go straight to the Debrief.

See:

<http://aviationnewstalk.libsyn.com/378-more-on-best-glide-bad-pilots-and-atc-in-the-news>


<https://thomaspturner.com/flying-lessons-weekly/>

<https://thomaspturner.com/beech-weekly/>

<https://aviationnewstalk.com>

<https://thomaspturner.com/flying-lessons-weekly/flying-lessons-for-april-3-2025/>

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Debrief

Readers write about previous *LESSONS*

Reader David Horvath writes:

In the [April 3, 2025 edition](#), you quoted [a reader in the Debrief]: “Using data from FlightAware and a whiz-wheel, it can be demonstrated the pilot exceeded Vne. Insurance coverage was one of the items discussed.”

I have one comment on that remark: **FlightAware generally shows groundspeed** while Vne is airspeed. With a strong tailwind, it is possible for groundspeed to exceed several of the V-speeds without the airspeed actually exceeding the limitations. Unless the insurance company had actual windspeed-at-altitude measurements for the aircraft’s location, they won’t have proof of the excessive speed. FlightAware (and the other flight tracking sites) are based on a combination of FAA radar data, FAA-provided ADS-B reports, crowdsourced ADS-B reports, and crowdsourced MLAT (location determination based on when multiple stations receive a signal). It is groundspeed that is derived from all of those (distance between location reports / time between reports) or aircraft reported GPS-calculated speed. Only under certain situations will ADS-B be broadcasting IAS/TAS (more advanced, integrated, avionics and transponders). See [this discussion of ground- versus airspeed on Flightaware](#), and this one about [ground speed, indicated airspeed, true airspeed and Mach number](#). This becomes clear with the news reports talking about [planes moving faster than the speed of sound](#).

Great points, David. Thank you.

See:

<https://thomaspturner.com/flying-lessons-weekly/flying-lessons-for-april-3-2025/>

<https://discussions.flightaware.com/t/air-speed-or-ground-speed/15810>

<https://blog.flightaware.com/speed-values-in-ads-b-data-gs-ias-tas-and-mach>

<https://nypost.com/2025/01/25/us-news/jet-stream-cold-speeding-up-eastbound-flights>

Reader and (apparently) happily retired FAA leader John Croft adds:

Thanks for all your hard work on *FLYING LESSONS*. There is rarely a week that goes by that I don’t write something down to make myself a better pilot or to share with pilot friends and flying clients! I’m guessing the hard part is to keep doing it week after week after week after week.

So [last] week’s message struck a chord in me ([The IMSAF-E- discussion](#)). I have an instructive story to tell on the topic. During the COVID, my workplace (FAA HQ) emptied out and we all worked from home. I think it was on Saturday that I found out that one of my close coworkers and friends, who also sat next to me in our department, had passed away very unexpectedly. Prior to finding this out, a pilot friend of mine had asked me to fly him out to a local airport approximately 30 miles north of my home base so he could pick up his aircraft from annual inspection.

We were supposed to head out around noon on this Saturday, and I had already been keeping an eye on the winds—**15 gusting 25-30, but pretty much aligned with both runways**. I typically will bail above 25 knot, but I’m *always looking to expand my minimums where it’s safe*, and this was looking to be a good day to do it....until I got the call about my friend. I remember sitting in front of our pellet stove having coffee with my wife—who often flies with me and knows my risk management practices well—and **I walked through PAVE/IMSAFE checklist verbally**. I give myself strikes for the various elements. **If I get up to two strikes, I have to have good mitigations** to proceed, and **three strikes is OUT**.

I was already up to two strikes with the wind, and my emotional state (shaken) about Hank’s passing raised the count to **three strikes**. **She and I agreed—you’re out**. I told my friend, who was a bit annoyed because he really wanted to get his plane (and I understood that), but I said we could go on Sunday, and the winds were forecast to be better anyway. Well wouldn’t you know it, I’m sitting there in front of the fire, watching the winds and checking the weather over and over again....it’s not blowing that hard right now....and maybe the forecasters are being pessimists... So over the next hour or so, **I start doubting my decision to cancel** and begin trying to convince myself that going flying will actually make me forget about my sorrow for my coworker. If I had a written FRAT [[Flight Risk Assessment Tool](#)], I probably would have started reevaluating the numbers...I was about to get back in touch with my pilot friend to tell him it’s a “Go” when I casually mentioned to my wife that I had changed my mind. **“But you have three strikes!”**

Her response snapped me out of it, and I committed to staying home and letting myself do the job of grieving. We did end up flying up to pick up the plane the next day, and my outlook was 100% better. This is my long way of saying a good practice might be to **share your PAVE/IMSAFE logic with someone you care about**. It makes the decision a lot more real when you realize **it's not just you that your decision will affect**.

A couple of years ago I dedicated an edition of *FLYING LESSONS* to relating my experience waiting out weather with my wife on the way home from a family Thanksgiving. In "[Aim for the Blue](#)" I wrote about my go/no-go decision-making process and the temptations I fought, including sharing my thoughts with my wife. Among other *LESSONS* from that experience I included:

- No matter what your experience, **we are all susceptible** to "get home-itis" [or "get-there-itis"] that tempts us to think up all sorts of rationalizations to support a "go" decision.

And in the context of this reader's comments,

- **Often pilots feel more pressure to meet a passenger or family member's schedule than even that person exerts on us him/herself.** An educated non-pilot can probably tell when they don't want you to fly and, presented the facts, will support your delay/divert/cancel decision. I *thought* my wife was pressuring me to go, but she wasn't.

In your case using your wife as a sounding board not only gave you the benefit of an objective opinion, it also forced you to listen to yourself...and make a good decision. Thank you, John, thank you for your career supporting flying safety, and congratulations on your retirement.

See:

<https://www.faa.gov/sites/faa.gov/files/2022-01/Flight%20Risk%20Assessment%20Tools.pdf>
<https://thomaspturner.com/flying-lessons-weekly/flying-lessons-for-november-23-2023/>

Reader Tom Stackhouse relates his experience:

There have been a few times when I went to the airfield to fly locally and, during my preflight, realized I was distracted. My head was not in the game. I discontinued my walk around and went home.

Long-time reader Tom Black adds:

Good reminder. After my mom died last March (2024) I grounded myself for 6 weeks before I felt like I was mentally back together. Even then for the first few flights after returning to flight I had pilot friends ride along and observe and critique me.

I recall a couple of times when I've decided to drive instead of fly because I was overstressed and distracted. Like you, for me it just didn't feel right. Even then it's hard to say no-go. **We have the option, and the obligation**, to make a confident "go" decision when things are good, to call a no-go when there's doubt, and to mitigate the risks—bringing another pilot or instructor along, holding yourself to stricter personal limits, etc. Thanks, Tom and Tom, for reinforcing the *LESSON*.

Frequent Debriefing and Mastery of Flight™ supporter Karl Kleiderer wraps it up this week:

As a former Naval Aviation guy who participated in some accident investigations I think about "human factors" quite a bit in my flying activity. One specific example similar or related to the helo story:

My mom had fallen overnight and broke her hip but was doing fine on the hospital as we got updates the next morning from my sister. My brother and I live in Charlotte [North Carolina] and Spokane [Washington] respectively and my mom lived in a Chicago suburb. Midday we get an urgent request to join a call with the doctor and find out my mom is crashing and isn't likely to make it. **"If you want to see your mom I suggest you find a way to get here ASAP."**

I call the airport and ask them to pull my Bonanza and fill it up because I'm leaving as fast they can fill it. My mind immediately goes to "human factors" mode and although I felt perfectly safe, I knew **the NTSB would have a field day** if something happened on my flight to Chicago. I called

a good friend who's also a DPE (Designated Pilot Examiner] and a Mastery of Flight supporter; copied here) and said "I know this is a big ask but I absolutely need you to cancel your checkrides and *come with me to Chicago*; I'll buy you a commercial ticket home for first thing in the morning. **I feel fine but you never know** and I just feel like it's smarter if you come along." He graciously agreed and we were in the air within about an hour. We landed PWK [Chicago Executive] and I immediately went to the hospital; my mom died not too long after I got there. Just so happens *I saw one of the most spectacular sunsets I'd ever seen* as we flew up the Chicago lakefront on the Skyway route under the Chicago Class Bravo.

I can't think of a more pertinent example. Thank you again for your continued efforts to inform the GA community and keep it safer.



Very touching story, Karl. And that's an amazing photo to soften the blow of losing your mother. Thanks for sharing a great story of "just in case" decision-making.

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– Andrew Urban, Sun River, Wisconsin

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NEW THIS WEEK: Stu Spindel, Dave Buetow, Ken Vernmar



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