

Winter Weather information for Pilots

Things to Remember about ice

1. Remember that there is no such thing as a little ice. Have an icing escape plan ready before you take off and use your "out" at the first sign of ice.
2. Turn the pilot tube heat on briefly during preflight and feel it to be sure it is working. Have it on well before entering clouds or reaching freezing temperatures.
3. Icing is very common over mountains because of the lifting action and in the lee of large lakes because of abundant moisture. Use extra caution in these areas and remember that alternate airports will be scarce in the mountains.
4. When there is a chance of ice, be sure that you can reach warmer than freezing temperatures, either above or below your altitude, or clear air, within the performance of your aircraft.
5. If you are topping clouds to stay out of ice, remember that the "tops" become higher near the low pressure center.
6. If you are flying an aircraft equipped with deicing boots, it is a good idea to cycle the boots periodically, even when ice is not expected. This keeps the valves in the pneumatic system from sticking.
7. If climbing above an icing layer, don't climb at a steep angle of attack. This can allow ice to form on the underside of the wing, which quickly degrades performance.
8. Pass along icing and cloud top information to FSS or Center Frequency.
9. When considering PIREPs for ice encounters, remember that aircraft of different sizes and wing shapes accumulate ice very differently. Look for reports on aircraft types similar to yours.
10. A "zero flap" or "partial flap" landing may be best when landing with a load of ice. Use higher than normal approach speeds. Consult your approved airplane flight manual.

Things to Remember in General about Winter Flying

1. If your aircraft's battery is dead, do not hand prop the aircraft without careful consideration. Better to have the battery serviced or use external power. Hand propping an aircraft is very dangerous.
2. Flight instruments need extra time to spin-up when they are cold. Be sure the cockpit is warmed-up and gyros are up to speed before takeoff.
3. Take blustery winter headwinds into account, especially if flying westbound, when planning for fuel requirements. Also, check wind direction and speed at your destination and be sure it is within the aircraft's and your crosswind capability.
4. During engine start be cautious about over priming your engine. Have a fire extinguisher nearby in case of emergency. Thorough preheating is the safest way to winter starts and it is easier on the engine.
5. After a snowfall, remember that the landscape will no longer look like the VFR sectional chart. Many landmarks will most likely be snow covered. Watch for White-out conditions.
6. Check with your destination airport for snow cover and removal operations. Airport surface conditions can change quickly with fast moving winter weather and the latest information may not be in the NOTAMs.
7. Dress for survival when you fly this time of year and ensure your passengers are dressed for survival. Also, pack an adequate winter survival kit.