

Mike Goulian Aviation Pro Tip of the Month - Dressing for the Season

As pilots, we are keenly aware of the distances we're able to fly in order to maximize the capabilities of our airplane. Social media posts are riddled with tales of flights to tucked-away airports and good-natured boasts of impressive ground speeds achieved from favorable tail winds. Day trips that were impossible to make in a car are easily accomplished in a Cirrus. While many of us depart from local airports however, we often find ourselves hundreds of miles away from our point of origin in only a few hours. These deceptively quick travel times can lead to significant weather changes. For this reason, thoughtful planning should go into what to wear while flying.

As pilots, we know that the weather can change in an instant. We use the tools at our disposal to plan our flights and take aviation forecasts with a degree of caution, because even the most rock-solid forecast can change in a short period of time. We spend a good amount of effort using these weather products to come up with a safe plan to complete a flight. In doing so, it's easy to overlook what may seem like an obvious thing: what we're actually wearing for the flight! Properly dressing for the weather will make any flight that much more enjoyable!

Any good flight starts with a thorough preflight walk-around. During the winter months in New England, that can often be a very chilly activity. Carrying a thin but warm set of gloves and a hat will make this process much more comfortable and will minimize the risks associated with a rushed preflight inspection of the airplane. Warm winter clothing is essential and should include layers that can be removed once in the airplane. Close attention should also be paid to your choice of footwear. While heavy winter boots may seem like a good idea while working outside of the airplane, they may hinder your ability to operate the rudder pedals. For this reason, it may be necessary to either choose lighter footwear with a pair of heavy socks or even to switch from boots to shoes once in the airplane. The flip side of the weather equation is equally important, and shorts and sandals should be avoided. Sensible, closed-toe shoes should always be worn.

Any discussion about what to wear in the airplane should always be accompanied by what to wear *outside* of the airplane. We've all heard the expression *dress to egress*. That means we should give careful consideration to what we're wearing in the unlikely event that we have to respond to an emergency situation and potentially even deploy CAPS. Making sure that we're appropriately dressed will improve any emergency situation we may encounter. After all, you never know how long you will have to spend outside of the airplane after a CAPS pull. As mentioned above, it's common to travel hundreds of miles during a flight, so planning for both the en route *and* destination phases of flight should also be considered. The weather at your point of origin is likely to be significantly different than your destination during a long cross-country journey.

Again, it may seem obvious, but appropriate attire will go a long way toward making your flights safe and enjoyable.