



Dress to Egress – Staying comfortable in an uncomfortable situation

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Two summers ago, I was flying to Oshkosh. I had a planned fuel stop in Cadillac, MI (KCAD) and we had been zigzagging through thunderstorms most of the day. We landed at CAD just behind the storm and taxied to the self-serve pump. No luck. The storm had knocked out the power to the pump, and when the power was restored, the internet connection did not come back online and there was no way to get the payment to go through. After a few phone calls and two hours of waiting, the pump was again working. We fueled up and were back on our way. Another crew, on the same trip, had a different problem: Their fuel truck ran out of gas after filling up only one side of the airplane. They had to wait for a couple of hours for another fuel truck to arrive so they could complete their refueling and get back on their way.

On a recent Friday in January, I heard about an airplane going off the runway at Plum Island and the occupants had to wait a while for EMS to arrive. What do these events have in common? Everyone experienced a multi-hour delay that was unplanned and unexpected. Fortunately, everyone had enough gear with them to stay comfortable.

This pro tip won't be so detailed as to cover how to live in the jungle, desert, or arctic for 30 days. Instead, my goal is to provide a few gear recommendations to you should you experience an unplanned delay while on an upcoming flight.

Drawing from my previous experience as a US Army Green Beret, I enjoy preparing for the unknown, and I have received formal training on gear preparation and packing, which I will reference today. The Army did an excellent job making things miserable, but with some training, the right gear, and most of all common sense, I learned to how to stay comfortable.

First, let's think about what we have **on** us and what we have **with** us.

What you have **on** you will come in handy if you lock yourself out of the airplane, for example. It will also be all you have if you have to egress quickly. It's our clothing, and probably a phone and wallet. Unless we are planning on being outside for an extended period, our clothing will most likely be what we wore from the hangar to the airplane. Think about that. You're in your warm house, you have a short walk to a warm car, into the hangar and then into a warm airplane. It's not really a chance to feel how cold it is outside. You will need a prolonged stay outside to truly feel how cold it is. To prepare for that, I recommend you pack a winter hat and gloves - at a minimum. Also, dress in layers to be able to adjust your comfort level to the

conditions in the airplane, all while having an extra layer with you in-reach if you unexpectedly need it.

Choose the right footwear too. Something not too bulky to interfere with the rudders – those things down by our feet, but something that can keep you warm for a bit outside. I have also seen some pilots attach a small GPS tracker, like the Spot, to themselves. This can help expedite a rescue should you have to put it down away from an airport. A second important tip is to keep your phone charging while in the airplane. Our new and modern Cirrus SR's make it easy to conveniently charge your phone while you are flying. It's also not a bad idea to keep \$100 cash on you to pay cash for fuel and snacks if the machines that take credit cards happen to be down while you are on your fuel stop.

What we have *with* us are the things we can get access to if we have time. It's a blanket in the back seat, a water bottle, and useful items in your flight bag e.g. flashlight and multitool. In my flight bag I keep two light weight mylar blankets, the kind they give runners after a marathon to help them retain their body heat. Not only do these do remarkably well keeping you warm, they also provide a basic level of sun and rain protection. They are easy to buy on Amazon and can serve as inexpensive peace of mind.

Lastly, think about your passengers. Start your passenger brief a week ahead of time, letting them know what to expect of their flight and how to dress. Bring an extra blanket for them, especially if you have anyone in the back.

When most people think of survival, we often think of having to survive after a crash. A remote crash is relatively rare event here in New England. The reality is, where most of us fly, help will be on the way quickly and we won't have to face a long-term survival situation. However, if you are planning on any longer cross-country flights this winter, remember the "Dress to Egress" mindset so that you're preparing to stay comfortable until help arrives. Even if that's just a jacket to keep you warm while you're waiting for the Uber driver to take you to the hotel at your destination.

If you have any additional questions about survival gear, reach out to me, I'd be happy to provide more specific recommendations for your next cross-country.