



# What Pilots Owe Their Passengers

April 2021 FAAS Team Brief

*A pilot's role in making aviation a safe and joyful experience for our passengers.*



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## Today's Question

What is your role in making aviation a safe and joyful experience for your passengers?



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One of the great joys of earning your pilot's license is the opportunity to share aviation with friends, coworkers and loved ones. Each non-pilot passenger brings their own past experiences, expectations, fears and excitement to a flight. The chemistry between a pilot, the airplane, the weather, the mission and the individual passenger makes every flight a new experience for all involved.



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In this webinar we will explore common perceptions non-pilots have about aviation, how to elicit and set expectations in advance of the flight, the questions that pilots should always welcome from passengers, considerations for pre-flight and in-flight briefings, as well as techniques for de-escalation and debriefing when things don't go exactly as expected.





## Who is Mike the Consultant?

A management consultant who works with organizations and investor groups on mission critical change management.

*In a previous life I've been an IT guy, an entrepreneur and spent a decade and a half as a firefighter/lieutenant.*



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## Who is Mike the Pilot?

A pilot holding Airline and Commercial licenses and instructor (CFI / CFII / MEI). I flew professionally for several years, predominantly in the Citation Bravo and CJ-series of Cessna Jets.

*Other airplanes I've flown include: Citabria 7ECA, Cessna 150/152/172/177/182\*/206\*/400, Beech Sundowner\* and King Air 90/200/350, Cirrus SR20/22\*, Diamond DA62, Piper Archer/Arrow/Meridian, Twin Cessna 310/414/421, and once a Convair 580 and a Restored WWII Bomber, too.*






Cessna

STATIONAIR  
TC

N51970




Each non-pilot passenger brings their own past experiences, **expectations**, fears and **excitement** to a flight.

#### Expectations and Excitement:

1. Do you travel on airplanes often? Airline? Private?
2. Have you ever flown on a small airplane? How'd you like it?
3. What are you most looking forward to on tomorrow's trip?
4. Did you ever dream of becoming a pilot? Do you want to touch the controls?
5. Would you like to come early and help get the plane ready?






Each non-pilot passenger brings their own **past experiences**, expectations, **fears** and excitement to a flight.

#### Past Experiences and Fears:


1. Do you have any concerns about tomorrow's flight?
2. Do you get motion sickness on cruise ships or long car rides?
3. What about the other passengers - do they have any concerns?
4. It's very unlikely event we will have an emergency. Would you like to talk through how we would handle those situations and how you could be helpful?



The chemistry between a **pilot**, the **airplane**, the weather, the mission and the individual...

### The Pilot and Airplane:


1. I've been flying for \_\_\_ years and have earned \_\_\_ licenses and a \_\_\_ medical certificate. I fly \_\_\_ often. That means that I can fly...
2. We'll be flying in a \_\_\_ airplane tomorrow. When we are taxiing, departing and arriving we'll keep quiet on the headsets, but some things you can help with are...
3. I'm am (or am not) rated to fly in the clouds and we may (or won't) spend some time in instrument conditions on this flight. During those times...



The chemistry between a pilot, the airplane, the **weather**, the **mission** and the individual...

### The Weather and Mission:

1. The weather for our flight is predicted to be...
2. If those predictions are accurate I anticipate they will impact our plans by...
3. If something changes we may delay or cancel our trip. What is your alternative plan if we can't fly as planned?
4. Although we're sharing costs, I need to make it clear that...



The chemistry between a pilot, the airplane, the weather, the mission and the **individual**...

The Individual(s):

1. I understand you're a licenced pilot. Tell me about your past flying experience...
2. If you're going to sit up front lets talk about who will be doing what...
3. If things get busy I'll fly the plane. Here are some things you could do to help...
4. Whether you're a pilot or not, your opinions, concerns and comfort are important to me, so here is how you can share them in flight. Here is how I'll signal you if I need a quiet moment to do something important...



## Tips from John Becker, Airline Pilot and Instructor

1. Know when to talk and listen “When I give you the finger we need to listen.”
2. If it’s not flight critical “Let’s talk about the rest of this on the ground.”
3. Participate “Just because I’ve been flying a long time doesn’t mean I can’t kill you.”
4. Observe the sterile cockpit “In the first and last 3 to 5 minutes let’s stay quiet.”
5. He suggests we check out the AOPA passenger briefing guide, which has techniques on briefing, good to knows, and more.



## Tips from Don Weaver, Commercial Pilot and Instructor

1. Nervous? “The airplane wants to fly and come home, too. It just takes some coaxing.”
2. Don’t be a show off “Smooth is impressive, steep turns and weightless drops aren’t.”
3. Land early “Most new PAX are scared about is landing, so fly them around the pattern first, with a gentle oversize pattern. A whole flight in 5 minutes. Then something fun.”
4. Demonstrate calm “Don’t jump at buttons or during bumps, move slow and talk.”
5. How you (the pilot) behave in turbulence sets the mood “Flying through bumps is just like driving on a dirt road in the countryside, you just can’t see the potholes coming.”

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## Now what? Let's Change Our Behavior.

Practical changes to make aviation a safe and joyful experience for our passengers.





## Let's Change Our Behavior: **The Days Prior**

1. **Share** photographs, social media posts, and videos of planes like yours.
2. Ask about the passenger's **experience** with small airplanes and their concerns.
3. Assure the passengers know where to meet you, and potentially even suggest they **visit** the airport and terminal/FBO in advance if they're nervous.
4. Discuss their alternate travel plans, should they **need**\* to get where you plan to go together and the weather isn't ideal, or you don't feel well that day, etc.



## \*How does Illegal Charter fit in with our obligations?

**"Are you certificated by the FAA as an Air Carrier?"**

The intent of the regulations is to protect consumers by holding air charter service providers to higher safety standards than non-certificated aircraft operators.

Aircraft leasing is a common and thoroughly approved practice that is carried out by hundreds of legitimate organizations. Unfortunately, there are some irresponsible companies that may offer to "charter" you an aircraft, under the guise of providing lease service. They may use deceptive practices to confuse the issue as to who is to be the actual aircraft operator. One such practice is the pretense of a "lease", whereby you are provided with an aircraft on a lease basis, although it is actually "serviced and flown" by the leasing company. Such an arrangement (depending upon the terms of the lease) could make you responsible for operating the aircraft, even though you do not intend to do this and have nothing to do with the flight other than indicating where and when you want to fly.

If the price is made attractively low, some groups seeking charter services may unknowingly enter into an evasively worded lease agreement. If you are tempted to do so, consider that if you accept what amounts to charter service from a company that is not certificated to operate charters, you may forego the protection of the higher

safety standards required by the FAA. You may also be violating many regulations.

If you have any doubt about the legitimacy of the air charter you're arranging, ask some specific questions, such as:

- "Are you certificated by the FAA as an Air Carrier?"
- "Would you provide me with a copy of your certificate?" or (if you are in the operator's office) "May I see your original Air Carrier Certificate?"
- "Are you insured as required by the US Department of Transportation regulations, and would you provide me with a copy of your policy?"

If all this seems a bit cumbersome to you, to remove any doubts, check with your local FAA Flight Standards District Office; found online at [WWW.FAA.GOV](http://WWW.FAA.GOV).

*"A safe flight is planned on purpose."*



Prepared as a public service by the National FAA Team with special thanks to the Kansas City Flight Standards District Office

### What if:

You, Your Company, The School Athletic Team, or any Social Group planned to Charter or Lease an Aircraft?

Would you know what questions to ask?



**Original Certificate**

... certifies that

**Now "What is a Leased Aircraft?"**

In this case, the aircraft is turned over to you or your group for whatever purposes that are spelled out in the lease. Normally you'd be expected to service and fly the aircraft yourself, or to engage properly certificated personnel for those purposes. An important distinction is that **when you lease an aircraft for your use, you become the aircraft operator.**

When you lease, you do not need an Air Carrier Certificate, but you do need to know how to maintain and operate the aircraft in accordance with the regulations. The minimum safety standards for leased aircraft, with regard to aircraft maintenance and pilot proficiency, are not as strict or detailed as those required for charters, nor are they subject to many of the FAA inspections.

*actual air carrier  
the original if you*



## Let's Change Our Behavior: **The Night Before**

1. Review the weather forecast, NOTAMS, TFRs, and other departure and destination data and consider a check in call and lay-language pax briefing.
2. If time allows, offer to meet and preflight the plane together. This could include pre-loading fuel, luggage, snacks, and comfort items like a coat or blanket.
3. Discuss the balance of fun and serious work flying will be for you and them tomorrow. Try and elicit any lingering questions that may disturb their sleep.



## Let's Change Our Behavior: **The Day of Flight**

1. Arrive before your passengers, and allow solitude for pre-flight if you require it.
2. Notify the FBO/terminal staff of your plan and ask them to welcome your guests.
3. Dress and act professionally, not as a charter captain, but as a trustworthy friend.
4. Move slowly and confidently, leaving room for questions and them to follow along with you as you traverse the ramp, climb on board and push buttons.
5. Brief all guests on safety precautions around other airplanes and in yours.

# FAA.gov Complete Passenger Briefing



## General Aviation Passenger SAFETY Briefing

story and photos by Susan Parson

### Passenger Briefing – Complete

**Y**ou may find this item, or something similar to it, on the pre-start checklist for just about any small or piston general aviation (GA) aircraft you fly. You are probably familiar with the passenger briefings you hear on airlines, and you know that the regulations—Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) §91.107—require you to brief your passengers on how to fasten and unfasten seat belts and (if installed) safety harnesses. That's clearly important, but have you ever stopped to think about what else a truly "complete" passenger briefing in a GA aircraft should include? If not, you might start by taking a look at 14 CFR 91.519, which outlines the briefing requirements for large and turbine-powered multiengine airplanes and fractional ownership programs. While not everything on this list applies to a typical GA airplane, it still contains all the basic elements for a comprehensive and professional briefing. Arranged for easy recall, here are the items essential to a complete passenger SAFETY briefing.

#### Seatbelts

This is the item explicitly required in the regulations, so it's a good place to start your passenger briefing. The regulations give the pilot in command (PIC) two specific tasks with regard to seat belts and shoulder harnesses. The first is a duty to brief passengers on how the seat belts work. "You cannot legally take off unless... the pilot in command of that aircraft ensures that each person on board is briefed on how to fasten and unfasten that person's seat belt and, if installed, shoulder harness. (14 CFR 91.107)(a)(1)."

The second statutory requirement is a duty to notify passengers that seat belts must be fastened. Specifically, the rule states that no pilot may take off, land, or "cause [an aircraft] to be moved on the surface" unless... the pilot in command of that aircraft ensures that each person on board has been

notified to fasten his or her safety belt and, if installed, his or her shoulder harness. (14 CFR 91.107)(2).

In addition to these required topics, it is a good idea to brief your passengers on how to adjust and lock the seat position. This discussion is especially important for the passenger in the right front seat... Just imagine how startling (not to mention dangerous) it would be for everyone aboard if an unbrieffed and unsecured passenger reacted to sudden forward seat travel by instinctively grabbing the yoke.

#### Air

You want your passengers to be comfortable during the flight, so the second major item to include in your briefing is environmental controls. Show your passengers where the air vents are located, and tell them how to open and close overhead and/or floor-level vents in their seating area. Many GA airplanes have other environmental controls (e.g., cabin heat)

## Passenger SAFETY Briefing

N \_\_\_\_\_

**S** Seat belts fastened for taxi, takeoff, landing. Shoulder harnesses fastened for takeoff, landing. Seat position adjusted and locked in place.

**A** Air vents (*location and operation*). All environmental controls (*discussed*). Action in case of any passenger discomfort.

**F** Fire extinguisher (*location and operation*)

**E** Exit doors (*how to secure; how to open*)  
Emergency evacuation plan.  
Emergency/survival kit (*location and contents*).  
Equipment (*location and operation*).

**T** Traffic (*scanning, spotting, notifying pilot*).  
Talking ("*sterile cockpit*" expectations).

**V** Your questions? (*Speak up!*)



## Let's Change Our Behavior: **Run-Up and Departure**

1. Explain what is happening, but (only) to the level of interest of your passengers.
2. Discuss safety roles of all crew and passengers, including emergency procedures.
3. Walk through sterile cockpit indications, such as a hand up for radio calls.
4. Give passengers an opportunity to participate in the journey at a level that they and you are comfortable with. That could include as a traffic spotter, radio operator, map zoom knob operator, climate controller, or maybe even the DJ.



## Let's Change Our Behavior: **During Stressful Times**

1. Do not be afraid to **declare** an emergency. Explain to your passengers that is your tool to get priority handling, and it can be theirs if you become incapacitated.
2. Recognize that moving quickly and erratically is **dangerous** for you and them.
3. Provide a basic, non-flight-critical job to someone who begins to **panic**.
4. Err on the side of **caution** and return to base or land enroute for passenger needs.
5. Ask for a **moment**, but don't "leave passengers hanging" if you need to catch up.

# AOPA's Emergency Equipment Briefing

## EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT


\_\_\_\_\_ Aircraft Identification Number

#1  
Survival/  
First aid kit

#3  
Handheld  
radio

#5  
Emergency  
beacon switch  
(remote)

#7  
Emergency  
beacon switch  
(primary)



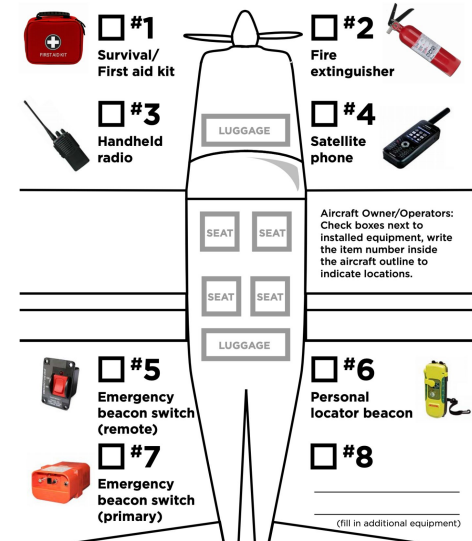
AOPA AIR SAFETY  
INSTITUTE

#2  
Fire  
extinguisher

#4  
Satellite  
phone

#6  
Personal  
locator beacon

#8  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(fill in additional equipment)



Aircraft Owner/Operators:  
Check boxes next to  
installed equipment, write  
the item number inside  
the aircraft outline to  
indicate locations.

## EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

Aircraft Owner/Operator: Check boxes next to installed items, fill in equipment-specific instructions

**EMERGENCY FREQUENCY**

121.50 MHz

**HANDHELD RADIO**

Turn ON: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tune frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Transmit: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**AIRCRAFT RADIO**

Turn ON: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tune frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Transmit: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**CELL PHONES**

Leave ON, even if no signal

**SATELLITE PHONE**

To operate: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**EMERGENCY BEACON**

Verify operation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNAL RESCUERS**

Signal fire

Signal mirror

Space blanket

**OTHER NOTES**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Let's Change Our Behavior: **After Landing / Incident**

1. In most cases, shutdown will be a joyous moment where you can kindle the spark of interest in a potential pilot. Don't let it go to waste. **Ask** open ended questions.
2. If something unexpected happened find a quiet place outside of the plane to **debrief**. Listen openly. Don't be defensive. You may learn and they may recover.
3. If something **safety** of flight related happened take notes and talk to your instructor, A&P, friendly FAAsteam rep and/or file an ASRS report.
4. Check in a day or two after the flight... any questions? Ready to go again?!



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# Download my Checklist



## Flying Question Checklist for the Non-Pilot Passenger

Non-pilot passengers have a right to ask any of the questions provided below before boarding an airplane or helicopter, large or small, jet or single-engine Cessna, regardless of the situation. With few exceptions, pilots love sharing their passion for aviation with strangers and friends. Not meant to be exhaustive, this is just a shortlist of conversation starters.

1. Have you been flying for a long time? Do you have an instrument rating?
2. Where did you learn how to fly? How often do you fly? Do you fly in the clouds or at night often?
3. How do pilot medical exams work? How often do you get one? How do you feel today?
4. Do you fly this airplane often? Who owns/maintains it? Is it hard to fly? Is anything broken?
5. Can you land at any airport? How did you choose the one(s) we're landing at today?
6. How much fuel does it take to get where we're going? How much fuel do we have on board?
7. What's the weather like here and on the way? Will it be bumpy? What is the weather at our destination? Will we go through the clouds? Should I "be on the lookout" for anything?
8. Do you think we might get any ice on our trip? If we get ice on the plane what will you do?
9. How much weight can we take on board today? What happens if we are overweight?
10. Are we going over water or wilderness? Do you have life vests or other safety gear?
11. What if you pass out or I get uncomfortable? What will we do? How can I get help? Show me.
12. How do the seatbelts and doors work? How can I adjust my seat? Can move around in flight?

Once airborne, you have a right to ask any questions you'd like answered, but understand that during takeoff and landing and in busy airspace the pilot(s) will need to focus their attention on flying, monitoring the systems, and talking on the radios. As a passenger, you can be helpful by looking out for other airplanes, helping other passengers if they experience discomfort, and keeping children and pets under control. If want to be able to help in a pinch, ask about taking a couple of hours of instruction.

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Mike Roth  
Management Consultant and Investor who loves helping people and flying.

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# Thank you.

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