



THE FEAR OF---  
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The fear of having an aircraft accident seldom enters my mind. After all, I have a pilot's ego. Something many of you share with me. But as an aviation insurance broker, nearly 100 aircraft insurance claims are reported to my office yearly. Regardless, my ego suppresses the fear that I might be involved in an accident.

A fear that is very real to me is admitting I'm not current; that I'm not proficient and I need to make my first flight with a certified flight instructor (CFI). I suspect many of you have that same fear.

I stopped flying during COVID. Plus, the 110-degree temperature of the Phoenix summer kept me out of the cockpit. I knew my first flight needed to be with a flight instructor who was current and proficient. But I was afraid the CFI wouldn't say, "You're good to go!". Instead, they'd see how bad I'd become. I was afraid the CFI would see how far behind the aircraft I was. I was afraid the CFI would tell me I'm not safe and that I need some dual instruction to bring me back to par. That scared the hell out of me. But, I put my fear and ego aside because I am a pilot. I've been trained to protect the equipment so I can fly another day. I've been trained to think of the safety of others and the need to return home unharmed to family and friends.

Finally--I brought my training to bear and made my first flight (and a few more) with a CFI. Guess what? I had fun doing it. It felt good not to be behind the aircraft.

Many glider pilots, due to their location, fly on a seasonal basis. This means there is apt to be a significant amount of time between their last flight of the season and the first flight of the next season. The Soaring Safety Foundation has long believed it would be valuable to take the first flight of the year with a flight instructor. The goal being to bring the pilot back to optimum proficiency as soon as possible with the hope of increasing enjoyment and simultaneously preventing accidents. But the thought of going up with a CFI brings a fear that is hard to overcome.

With the downward turn of the economy, it's logical to assume many pilots will be waiting longer to start their soaring season. It's reasonable to assume their skills will have atrophied more than usual thus increasing their chance of an accident. They silently ask themselves the question, "Should I go up with a CFI to get proficient?" They don't shout the question to themselves. It's a whisper. It's a question they don't want to face.

Here are just a few of the answers they give themselves.

- I don't have the money to spend.
- I've been flying for years without an incident. I'm good to go.
- What if I get a brand new CFI? I probably know more than they do!
- I know more about the aircraft I fly than the CFI does. They can't show me anything I don't already know.





- No one is going to tell me I need dual instruction!

I'm sure there are many more obstacles to safety that can be enumerated, but the real reason we avoid that all important flight with the instructor is fear. Fear the CFI will find a deficiency. Fear the CFI will suggest dual instruction.

In certain parts of the country soaring is a year-round sport. Staying current has been less of a problem. But, it's anticipated a number of those pilots will be flying less due to the change in the economy. They may wish to consider their first flight after a long layoff to be with a glider flight instructor as well.

As an aviation insurance broker and CFI, I've developed an insight into pilot involved accidents. Simply, a lack of currency promulgates a lack of proficiency which can translate into an accident which might have been avoided were the pilot operating their aircraft to the best of their ability.

The answer to the question of whether or not a lack of proficiency due to seasonal flying or a poor economy will result in more accidents is anyone's guess. But I think there will be less chance of a loss if those pilots who haven't flown for a while overcome their fear and make their first flight of the season with a flight instructor. If I can do it, so can you!

Have a safe and fun season!!!

