

Training

Several months ago we re-ran one of Dave Heape's columns because it addressed an important issue and was so well written that there was no use doing a re-write of the same topic. This month, with Dave's permission we revisit another of his previous columns.

“Just from my general observation over the years, one of the most frequent causes of crashes by relatively new pilots is losing orientation of the airplane. While one could go on endlessly about what did cause the crash (including “**gotaglit**h!”), getting into trouble and not being able to figure out what the airplane is doing and then correcting it is very often the cause for crashes early in a pilot's flying. Just past the first several months after solo we all want to get a little more out of ourselves and our airplane. That is when lots of fun begins and some risks are taken. Now before anyone says that I am not an advocate for some risky (not to be confused with unsafe!) flying, let me simply state that if you don't push yourself, you will always just get it up and “tool around” like on a Sunday afternoon drive. Pushing yourself is fun, and will make you a better flier, but it comes with some risks.

Disorientation has gotten everyone at one time or another, so there is nothing to be ashamed of. However, the more you fly, the less you will become disoriented. And even then, it is going to happen sometimes. There are lots of ways to get re-oriented. One of them is to walk to your crashed airplane and then you know exactly how it is oriented; generally not ever piece going in the same direction. That is the wrong time to think about disorientation.

Several hints for trying to keep from getting disoriented: first, stay high when you are doing new and/or risky maneuvers; altitude is your best friend. Second, stay in close so you can see the airplane. Third, stay ahead of the airplane; know what maneuver you are going to attempt, how you want it to come out of the maneuver, and then what your next maneuver is going to be. Getting behind the airplane is probably the single greatest cause of getting disoriented. Finally, think about the things that you want to make the airplane do and visualize them in your mind. You would be surprised at how much mental training you can actually do without even having the airplane in the air.

Disorientation is going to happen from time to time but if you work at it, the resulting disasters can be minimized.”

Thanks again to Dave for the above....

I'd like to reinforce Dave's comment about the benefit of staying in close. As some of you know, I had a hard impact to my left eye two plus years ago and it resulted in a detached retina. The eye team botched the repair and now I can't see small things (like a plane in the air) with that eye. When I tried flying again, I quickly learned the benefit of staying in close...and its cheaper than buying a bigger plane!

Remember to try something new each time you fly!

Steve Klute
Training Coordinator