

Are you staying SAFE ?

On the surface this is a simple question. Of course we are “staying safe”. We do our flight plan, check the weather, perform a preflight, fly often enough to stay proficient and so on..... You could say we are “flying safe” with the skills we have acquired. Have your skills improved, stayed the same or are they at their highest they have ever been? What are you doing to maintain or improve your skills? Are you sure you are staying safe? Is it good enough to only practice and refresh the skills you use on a regular basis?

From the first instant we began our flight training; everything we learned was linked to flying safely. We learned about many topics including airspace, airport operations, emergency procedures and worked diligently to learn to fly the helicopter. We learned new exciting topics and kept going over the “old” lessons to make sure we retained what we had learned. As time went on we became more proficient, which really meant we were becoming competent, safe pilots.

Eventually no matter how far we go in aviation, whether we get a private pilot certificate, become a check airman or get an ATP rating, the learning levels off. In fact once we settle in to a routine our retention starts to fade and we only stay sharp on the knowledge or skills we use regularly. Even when you are flying professionally you may not be practicing varying types of flying as often as you would like, or need to. Once or twice a year you do a check ride but day to day your emergency procedures weaken and knowledge skills degrade through

disuse.

So, once again I ask, are you flying safe? Do you work at keeping your knowledge sharp? Do you make the opportunity to keep proficient in all of the maneuvers?

It is a difficult task to stay sharp on all of the areas in aviation. It takes motivation, desire and opportunity to keep or improve all of your skill sets you worked so darn hard to acquire. Motivation has to come from within. We may get motivation from knowing that the sharper we stay, the less likely we are to have an accident or incident. It may come from the desire to attain another rating, get bragging rights among our friends or make it an opportunity to meet new friends in the industry. Whatever the reason, try and find the motivation to retain or improve your knowledge and skills.

Here are some things you could do to help you make it happen.

Sign up at WWW.FAA.GOV and take advantage of the free training seminars – online courses and library of training materials.

Fly with an Instructor so you can practice emergency procedures. Not only will the skills come back quickly, it may remind you of the fun in flying.

Ask if you can drop in on a ground session at a flight school

near you to refresh your knowledge.

If you are or have been a CFI, ask a local school if you can come in and teach a class. This will definitely get the juices flowing again and give you the opportunity to share your knowledge with others.

Dust off an old text book or flash cards and spend an hour going over them. You might find that once you start, it may motivate you to keep at it a while longer.

Subscribe to a helicopter magazine and read training and safety related articles.

It is important to stay well rounded in our knowledge and flying skills. No matter what method you use to stay sharp, it will make flying a little more fun and a lot safer, so “Stay safe” and get involved!