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ARE YOU READY?

By TOM GOONEN

STORY COVER IMAGE: Pilatus Aircraft, Ltd

When it comes to dealing with an emergency in the aircraft, are you ready?

I have heard several comments during training that makes me doubt some pilot's readiness to deal with emergency situations. "I don't have to worry about that engine problem because it happened on a different airplane." PT6A engines are so similar that if it happened on a King Air for instance, it could happen on a PC-12. Another example of what one pilot said, "I spend a lot of money on maintenance and I have told my mechanic that I want my plane one hundred percent ready so I won't have to worry about anything breaking." This same pilot used this as his justification for not doing preflight inspections. We are talking about machines made by humans, maintained by humans, and operated by humans. I do agree that good maintenance reduces the risk of mechanical failures, although it does not eliminate all risk. The good news/bad news regarding the PC-12 is that it is a very reliable airplane. Owners and operators are fortunate to have such a reliable airplane. The reason I say it is also bad news is that it creates a sense of complacency that allows a situation to catch us off guard. Consequently, we must always be prepared.

To be prepared, the pilot must know and understand his airplane. The normal and emergency checklists are a good place to begin. Most aircraft will have memory items stated in the emergency section of the pilot's operating handbook. Most manuals will also include a statement that the pilot in command must be thoroughly familiar with all the procedures listed in the manual. This particularly applies to the emergency procedures. Case in point, a partial power loss is not a memory item per se, but you won't have time to pull out a checklist to remind you to engage the starter if the Ng drops below fifty percent. You also need to be familiar with the procedures so you don't stumble when trying to follow them. Or, some pilots will ask their passenger in the right seat to read a checklist to them. What do you do when they read the wrong checklist or skip an item on the correct checklist? I have observed both of these situations during training in the simulator. Since the Pilatus is a single piloted aircraft, on occasions I allow the copilot to read the checklist when requested by the PIC. But I only allow the person in the right seat read the checklist specifically called for by the pilot in command. If the PIC calls for the wrong checklist, the person in the right seat must give him what he asks for. I do this for a couple of reasons. If a non-pilot is in the right seat, they will give the PIC exactly what he asks for. The PIC also has to be aware that the checklist does not correspond to the emergency at hand. If the person in the right seat is a qualified pilot there could be another issue to face. If pilots do not regularly fly and train together, they probably move at different paces. It is important that the person reading the checklist does not move at a faster pace than the pilot who is directing its use. Getting ahead of the PIC is equivalent to skipping items.

Here is my recommendation to improve your understanding of the checklists. Ask yourself, "Why?" If you are unsure about the reason, you can usually look for the answer in the following step. These checklists have been written by people much smarter than myself and placed the actions in an order to prepare you for the next step. If you are still uncertain as to "Why?" go to the operating handbook and read deeper in the systems section. Your enhanced understanding will enable you to respond to the unexpected situations more quickly and more effectively to ensure a successful outcome.

Please don't wait until just before your recurrent training to get yourself ready. Review your procedures on a regular basis so when you are asked,

"Are you ready?"

you can positively answer

"Yes."