



Bailing out



WE'RE WELL INTO A NEW YEAR, BUT it's not too late to wish everyone a Happy New Year. Some of us are lucky enough to live in areas where flying is a year-round occurrence. The rest of you will be waxing your winter skis for a few more months or working on your aircraft.

I've had a busy year and just moved onto one of the neatest small airports in California. It's hard to work when I can see from my shop window the aircraft taking off (see photos). I'm now on the Columbia, California, Airport (O22) nestled in the foothills of the Sierras, where gold was first discovered in 1848. Check it out online. Those of you who wish to fly in and visit are welcome to do so. It has a grass strip as well as a 4,600-foot paved strip, no tower, overnight camping sites, and a 10-minute walk puts you into the past. The town of Columbia is a state historical park and looks like something from the 1850s. No vehicles are allowed downtown, which consists of four or five blocks. You can walk, ride a horse, or ride the stagecoach. It's a great destination for you and your family. Now down to business.

Since I write a lot about bailing out, I thought I would discuss the meaning of those two words from a different perspective. Recently I read an article that talked a lot about bailing out. Yet this article was about making rational and timely decisions and had nothing to do with physically bailing out of an aircraft.

That got me thinking. Bailing out is something each of us does on a routine basis. We often bail out of bad business deals, bad relationships, bad investments, bad working conditions, and maybe bad ideas gone awry. Or, it could be as simple as bailing out your leaking boat. I'm sure you can think of many more to add to the list. Unfortunately, over the years I've seen the



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tragic results of a poor, an untimely, or no decision to bail out.

The key to your survival is you made the decision to bail out before you were harmed physically, emotionally, or maybe financially. The point is you survived to make other decisions and begin the process of bailing out all over again. We all do this. Life is exciting, but it's also interspersed with the occasional need to bail out. Hopefully you'll learn from these mistakes and are able to keep your feet firmly planted on the ground, or in your aircraft. A longtime and very successful friend of mine said he made many bad business decisions over the years and bailed out of many before disaster struck. He also said, "I seldom made the same mistake a second time."

Bailing out of your airplane is not unlike the aforementioned scenarios. It requires making a conscientious decision to do so, before time runs out. The big difference, when flying your aircraft, is that you are not afforded the luxury of discussing it with your family, friends, and peers or mulling over it for a day or two. Time continues to fly by and the seconds are ticking off. *What will you do?*

You need to make the correct decision and make it now. I've discussed this before in many of my articles and at my seminars. You must have a plan. Bailing out might mean turning around and heading back to the airport because the weather is deteriorating. Maybe getting to that destination is not that important after all. Flying to visit a friend for lunch or that long-

awaited fishing trip can wait when the weather turns a little iffy. They'll understand. Remember, planes do have a reverse. It's called a 180-degree turn. Bailing out might mean that funny noise you hear as you're about to go over the mountains should be checked out before going any further. It could mean sitting on the ground when you're not feeling so hot. It might mean postponing your takeoff at an airport with a high density altitude. Maybe the snap roll on the 45 downline is something you might consider eliminating from your routine.

The sad thing is we've all read articles where people should have bailed out earlier, but something clouded their decision-making and they didn't. As a DPRE (designated parachute rigger examiner) for the FAA, I occasionally do accident investigations and have seen the results of people who should have bailed out earlier, but for whatever reason didn't.

You don't physically have to jump from your aircraft to have a successful bailout. You just have to remember to take that first giant leap of faith and just say *no! I will not continue with what I'm doing or plan on doing.* This is especially true if it involves a passenger, who has put his or her trust and life in your hands. That aerobatic ride you promised him or her can wait another day. A rain check can always be cashed in later. A bad decision cannot always be cashed in. It may be crashed in instead. When the hair on the back of your neck starts to tingle and stand up, maybe you should consider bailing out.

Fly safely, fly often, and don't be afraid to bail out.

If flying in the area, drop in and say hello.

Keep the questions coming: allen@silverparachutes.com. **IAC**

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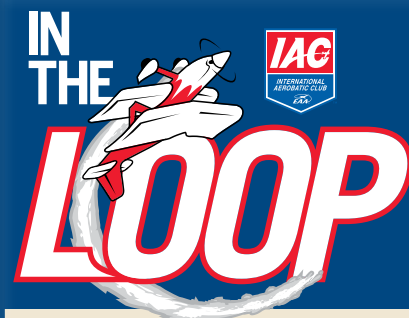
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