EAA485

May 2026—Panhandle Pelicans

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Our April meeting featured the award of two more Ray Flight Training Scholarships for 2026. Winners were McKenzie Peterson and June Moore. Please offer them your congratulations when you see them around. In the eight years this program has existed, Chapter 485 has now awarded a total of thirteen Ray Scholarships, at least one every year. Ten are now Private Pilots, with McKenzie and June in training. That is a lot of money and mentoring! In addition, thanks to a generous anonymous donor, we have awarded 6 more private pilot training scholarships, with 5 of them becoming private pilots and beyond.

Our May 9th meeting schedule will be condensed, to allow a field trip to ST Engineering at Pensacola International Airport immediately afterward. VMC/IMC meeting will go 8:30-9:30am as normal, then membership meeting will start at 9:45am and wrap up NLT 10:30am. There will be no lunch served afterward. When we finish the membership meeting, all interested parties are invited to drive their cars to ST Engineering for a guided tour. We hope to start the one-hour tour by 11:15am. This heavy aircraft (757/767/777) maintenance facility is worth the trip! Our guide will be Kevin Kropp of the Pensacola State College A&P Mechanic Training Program. Please join us. Type "ST Engineering, 1 Merlion Way, Pensacola" into your Google Maps and it will take you there.

Looking ahead, at our June meeting we hope to hear from member Roy Bentley about his C-17 combat flying experiences.

For the July meeting, we just confirmed guest speaker Col. Joe Kinego, USAF (Ret). He works as a docent at the Naval Museum. He will recap his illustrious military flying career, including 148 combat missions in Vietnam in the RF-4C Phantom, and over 100 Cold War missions in the SR-71.

Hope you join us for our May 9th meeting and/or field trip!

Ralph

20 TIPS FOR VFR FLIGHT

Posted by Bill Cox | Jan 1, 2025 | Become a Better Pilot, Lessons From The Logbook - Bill Cox

VFR flying can be more difficult than you might imagine. Investigators study accident statistics with reports of highly qualified pilots getting themselves into unfathomable situations, usually as a result of a tragic comedy of errors.

Accordingly, I've put together a series of suggestions that cover a variety of problems and situations. There are only 20 listed below, but one could add another 50 or so without breaking a sweat. Some of these don't relate to emergencies; they're associated with common-sense procedures to make VFR flying easier, safer, and more fun.

1. Despite the near-universal adoption of GPS for en route navigation, resist the temptation to simply dial up the identifier of your destination and fly direct. Consider instead putting together a flight plan that includes slight deviations to stay near highways, airports, or flat terrain. You'd be amazed how far you can deviate from a great circle route without adding significantly to total distance.
2. Think twice about cruise altitude. On short trips, the tendency is often to level at 4,000-7,000 AGL. Higher is nearly always better for several reasons. Fuel burn is less, the airplane may actually be faster up high and range will be extended. Most general aviation airplanes can reach 8,000-10,000 feet in only five to seven minutes more, and they'll be above much of the other traffic, benefit from longer radio range, usually operate above the convection layer in smoother air, and have a larger pad of sky beneath them in the event of a problem.
3. While it's true you don't always have to fill the tanks, and tankering six hours of fuel for a one-hour flight is excessive — you have to burn fuel to carry fuel — remember the catchphrase of many fighter pilots: The only time you can have too much fuel on board is when you're on fire. You may never know what circumstances will dictate the need for more fuel, but if you don't have any extra, it won't matter. It's nearly always a good idea to carry as much fuel as practical, cabin payload and CG permitting of course.

4. Make it a point to clean at least the windshield and front side windows every time you fly. Well-known author and humorist Rod Machado does that religiously and if it's good enough for Rod, it's good enough for me. I've had too many instances of spotting another aircraft coming right at me only to discover it's a bug spot with the light hitting at exactly the correct angle.

5. Get in the habit of minimizing extra weight by storing it in your locker or hangar. Obviously, this applies equally to VFR and IFR flying. Extra weight slows you down. You might be surprised at the amount of useless junk you're carrying around for no good reason. I did a little housekeeping to my airplane a few months ago, and managed to find 50 pounds of miscellaneous stuff that I'd been too lazy to offload: extra oil, extra tool kits, extra tiedown kits, charts for most of the Western Hemisphere, kneeboards, enough pens to write *War and Peace*, four sets of chocks (metal, wood, composite, and unidentified), several IFR hoods, a couple of outdated show programs for EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, five life preservers (for a four-seat airplane), three cans of wax, two backup portable GPSs — you get the idea. Also, store whatever you do carry aboard as far aft in the airplane as convenient. The farther aft the CG (obviously inside the envelope), the faster you'll cruise.

6. When you're through using an air vent, remember to close it. Most general aviation airplanes don't have air conditioning so many of us open the air vents in hot weather and forget to close them until winter. That introduces what aeronautical engineers call parasite drag just as surely as opening a window and sticking your hand in the wind. Even if the actual vent doesn't disrupt the airflow, the disturbed air associated with the vent will add drag.

7. It's good sense to use flight following whenever you can, especially around heavily congested airspace. The FF controller usually has some very sophisticated radar at his or her disposal, very likely more exotic than the TIS/TCAS you have on your panel (if you're that lucky). Flight following can be especially valuable if your trip is long, over water, or over remote terrain. If you have a problem, you won't need to scramble to find the proper frequency. (Out in the boonies, I keep one radio set on 121.5 MHz anyway in case I or someone else needs help.) A flight following controller can also help keep you clear of restricted or prohibited zones and advise when they're "hot." Also, each subsequent controller will automatically update the altimeter setting with every handoff.

8. Route around big cities whenever possible. Traffic is usually lighter; smog isn't as much of a problem; fuel, ramp and parking prices generally are lower in the boonies; and you're less likely to receive vectors away from your course line or have altitude restrictions to deal with.

9. Be smart about descents and don't automatically start down at 500 fpm (as I did for years). In winter, you may want to stay high as long as possible to maximize the effects of tailwinds. Similarly, hot surface temps in summer may dictate the same technique to avoid the heat and convective turbulence down low. If there are gathering clouds ahead, you may want to descend early to make certain you don't get trapped on top.

10. Don't be paranoid about turbulence. You don't need to reduce to maneuvering speed for every little bump in the sky. I flew with a G-meter in my first airplane — only because I had an open hole in the panel and needed to fill it with something cheap — and I was amazed to discover that I almost never encountered an "air pocket" (as the media likes to call them) stronger than 1.5–2g. If you're uncomfortable, do whatever's necessary, but don't assume the airplane will start coming apart every time you fly through a section of cobblestone sky.

11. Think ahead for cross-country trips. Take along updated charts, food, water, pilot relief bags, a big watch, an extra pair of Ray-Bans, and survival gear as necessary. Don't forget life vests if you're flying over large expanses of water. Everyone knows you need vests for ocean crossings, but the Great Lakes and even some rivers can also demand a vest and sometimes a raft. If you're flying in remote areas, consider including a survival weapon. I carry a .22 rifle/20-gauge shotgun over and under. Yes, I'm aware there can be legal implications to carrying a rifle in some states, but I'd rather have it and not need it than need it and not have it.

12. Conversely, remember that water can be your best friend in some circumstances over landlocked trips. A friend was ferrying a new Mooney to Europe a few years back and suffered a total engine failure over the Swiss Alps. The terrain in every direction was near vertical so he picked out the biggest flat spot he could find, an alpine lake, and ditched the airplane rather than attempt a dead stick landing against the side of a mountain. The airplane got very wet, but he swam away uninjured.

13. Temper your judgment about flying in high mountain terrain at all if you can avoid it. Yes, it's beautiful, especially with popcorn cumulus floating by, but there may be little margin for error if you accidentally enter a cloud. A while back, two good friends, both excellent IFR-rated pilots, flew a new Caravan straight into the side of a hill near Palm Springs, apparently another CFIT (controlled flight into terrain) accident. A 180-degree turn won't necessarily solve your problem — it may make it worse if clouds have closed in behind you — but it's a far safer bet than continuing without a clearance or any idea where the tall rocks live.

14. If you fly with a panel-mounted GPS, as nearly everyone does these days, consider buying a portable backup. I carry two backups on most ferry flights. That way I have a tie breaker in case they disagree. Panel mounts typically have their own dedicated battery specifically designed to avoid losing position information following an electrical power failure, but depending upon your situation, that may not be enough. You can find some excellent, used Garmin portables for less than $500, a small investment for the extra security.

15. Avoid flying at any limit speed. Vne is the obvious worst one but there are a dozen others. Vle, max landing gear extension speed, is often specified to save the gear doors. Violate it consistently, and those doors may eventually fail. It's the same with flap extension speed, Vfe. If you use gear and flaps to decelerate, do so only well within the specified limit speeds.

16. Even if you're not IFR rated, consider carrying a set of Low Altitude Enroute charts for the trips you make most often. A Low Altitude chart can provide you with IFR minimum en route altitudes, an instant measure of safe altitude along established routes. You'll also have an easy reference to leg distances between VORs and airports (sometimes). IFR charts also provide sector frequencies in case you need help and there's no one awake on 121.5 MHz.

17. Everyone knows you should scan the airspace around you for other traffic, but the most neglected quadrant of see-and-be-seen is directly behind you. Studies of midair collisions have shown that the most likely risk is from the rear. That's especially true during descents when a following aircraft overruns preceding traffic. If you're descending, try throwing in some slight turns occasionally and check your six for what might be gaining on you.

18. Think at least three times about flying VFR at night — especially when there's no moon. A few years back, the FAA considered requiring additional simulator hours for a night VFR endorsement. The idea didn't fly, but there's no question night flying is more demanding than day VFR. Horizons often vanish at night, clouds become invisible, and ground detail usually fades to black. Night can simulate a black hole, no place for a VFR pilot.

19. Every pilot without an instrument rating fears the possibility of winding up on top of an overcast with little fuel, experience, or options. It can happen to anyone, especially aviators who think they're doing everything right and accidentally allow the clouds to thicken and turn solid below them almost unnoticed. There's a special risk over any body of water that can generate instant ground fog. The tendency is for pilots to watch the sky rather than the ground and barely notice when clouds creep in insidiously and blot out all VFR reference points. For that reason, keep an eye on the lower quadrant to ensure you're not being seduced into a situation you'll have trouble getting out of. Flight watch can give you a warning of the problem by providing temperature and dew point. If those two numbers are approaching each other, it may be time to look for someplace else to go.

20. Finally, it's probably the most common advice offered to new pilots, but don't wait too long to ask for help. Whether you're trapped above clouds, "temporarily disoriented," or have some other problem, someone on the ground may be able to offer assistance. Many pilots assume any admission of shortcomings in their flight planning or decision-making will automatically result in a violation. That's rarely the case. Many FAA employees are pilots themselves who've been there. If you do get into trouble, remember the four C's of an emergency other than a loss of power: climb, communicate, confess, and comply. Climb for better radio reception. Communicate with someone on the ground who may be able to help. Confess the details of your situation. Comply with any directions. Remember that while this may be your first emergency, the person on the other end of the radio has likely dealt with the same problem a dozen or more times. He or she has access to information, equipment, and assets that you don't.

DRANO'S ZENITH 750 UPDATE...

IS...




(Drumroll, please...)

COMPLETE!!

Bottom Line Up Front, my 750 project is complete; it's ready for inspection and certification by an FAA Designated Airworthiness Representative (DAR). There are several little things I still plan to do on the plane but by our May meeting I hope to be flying and working my way through the phase I test flights.

One of my taxi sessions.

While the preceding summary paragraph is simple enough, what is not detailed is the coordination and paperwork required with the FAA to get to that point. A LOT has changed from the time I built my RV-6 project. Today, the FAA processes are largely done on-line but that should not to be confused as anything that is either more simply accomplished or more efficient. Even my DAR has had challenges with the FAA on-line system and has gone to considerable extent to help me with it. OBTW, the FAA system is not user friendly with the Apple operating system.

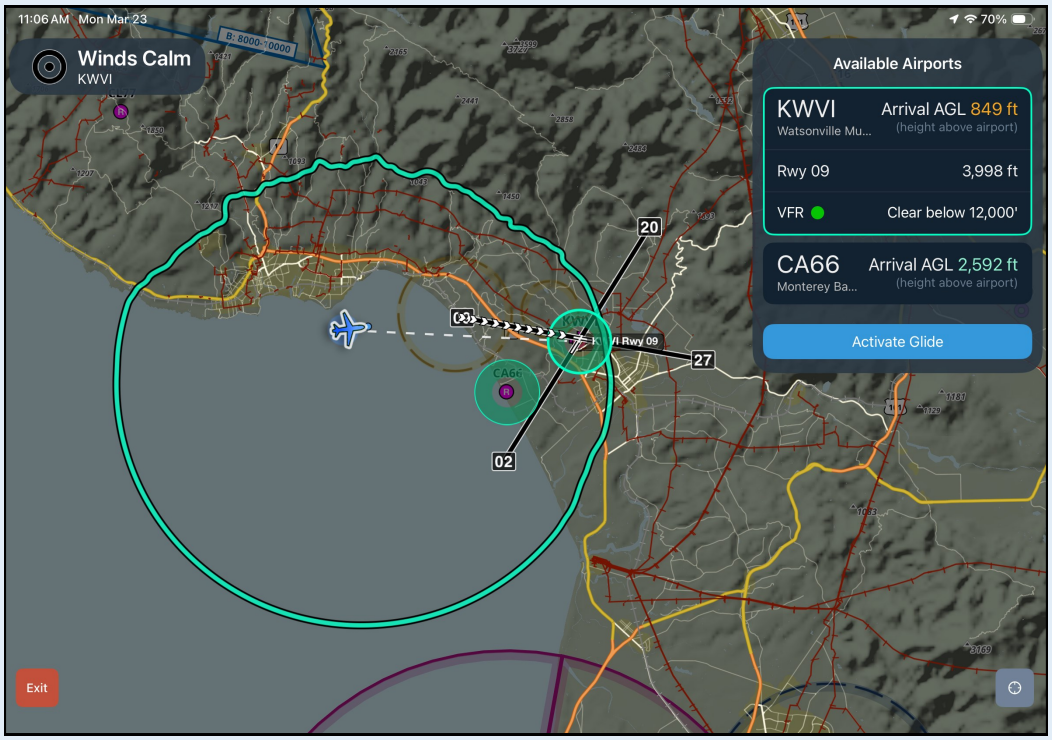
My point here is not to criticize the system but to encourage anyone taking on an aircraft building project to review the requirements early and get started with the paperwork and coordination much earlier than I did. Paul Mather, my DAR, told me a year ago at Sun-n-Fun that I was behind and he was right.

I have checked and rechecked the aircraft a dozen times. The parameters for engine monitoring are set in the EMS and have been tested, fuel flow has been tested and exceeds 150% the full power requirement, the aircraft has been taxied and responds as it has been designed. Paul has been extremely helpful with advice and we are waiting for the "system" to allow him to do the inspection. Things are coming together and soon I'm going to fly this puppy! I look forward to keeping you informed!

Drano

Jeppesen ForeFlight Introduces Emergency Glide Mode

FLYING APRIL 21, 2026 BY MEG GODLEWSKI



When a pilot experiences an uncommanded loss of engine power in flight, the first step is to establish best glide airspeed, and the next is to find a place to land. Sometimes the latter can be a challenge if a pilot is flying over unfamiliar terrain.

Now Jeppesen ForeFlight is taking the guesswork out of the "where will you go?" question through the creation of Emergency Glide Mode (EGM), which identifies the best place to land given the aircraft's altitude, airspeed, and the winds.

Pilots familiar with ForeFlight Glide Advisor know that it shows the glide range of the aircraft in the event of a loss of engine power. Emergency Glide Mode takes the knowledge one step further. When activated, it depicts reachable airports and, if none are available, the best choices for a potential off-airport landing.

Nearby airports are listed based on factors including distance, runway length, current altitude and heading, winds aloft, and real-time weather conditions. The EGM also indicates the expected altitude above ground level (agl) upon arriving at the selected airport, allowing for better situational awareness.

If there are no suitable airports within glide range, EGM instead highlights possible landing areas. The company said this is done by using a sophisticated algorithm applied to U.S. Geological Survey data, providing the pilot with a high-resolution map of potential off-airport landing sites.

Jeppesen ForeFlight's Emergency Glide Mode gives pilots the ability to find the best places to land when the engine quits, eliminating the guesswork. [Credit: Jeppesen ForeFlight]

The minimum length of a potential landing strip is 1,000 feet. The analysis includes the type of terrain, infrastructure (such as powerlines), distance from obstacles, surface grade, and tree canopy density. Sometimes in an emergency a "best bet" is all the pilot is going to get, then it comes down to picking terrain that provides the best possible outcome.

With Emergency Glide Mode installed, when activated ForeFlight automatically configures best glide speed and ratio for many aircraft types. Users can customize it for their aircraft.

Once Glide Advisor is enabled, Emergency Glide Mode can be activated in flight with a single tap. It also automatically enables situational awareness tools such as instrument panel, extended centerlines, and track vector if not already active. This enables pilots to establish a direct route to the landing site.

"Emergency Glide Mode helps pilots who've lost all engine power quickly identify and prioritize the best available airports within gliding range based on their aircraft's performance," said Cole Crawford, product manager at Jeppesen ForeFlight, in a news release. "When no airport is reachable, it points you in the most promising direction so you can get your eyes outside faster."

Here's Lily s CFI Daniella Torres, DPE Dennis Sherwood, and Chapter President Ralph Moser with Lily .

May 2026 Ray Aviation Scholarship Report

Lily Bannon is our newest Ray Scholarship recipient to become a private pilot. She completed her check ride at PNS on April 23rd.

2026 Ray Scholarship Program

McKenzie Peterson and June Moore were approved by the EAA and were presented their "big check" at the April meeting. They will start their flight training at any moment. McKenzie has selected Pray Aviation in Milton for her training and June has selected Pensacola Air Flight School for her training.

Secretary's Notes April 11, 2026

VMC: Bumpy Final
IMC: Surprises at night

General Meeting
- Officer Reports
  - Oct. 3: CJFA YE Rally
  - Oct. 31: Fall YE Rally

McKenzie Peterson and June Moore are the two winners of the 2026 Ray Scholarships!

EAA and Local Chapter Sites

EAA 485 EAA 1265

EAA HDQTRS EAA 108

EAA 416

Interesting Links

Making the First Airbus 220 Time Lapse

Jetman Unleashed in Dubai

Boeing 737 Time Lapse Build

F-18 Low Level

High Speed Carrier Maneuvering

Miscellaneous

1800wxbrief.com

FAA Notams

Barnstormers

Skyvector.com Flight Planning, Charts

AirNav.com Airport info, Fuel Prices

Normally meetings will be held at Roscoe Field Airport **(82J) (Uni 122.8) on the Second Saturday of each month at 10:00 AM unless otherwise posted. If flying in, check NAS Pensacola (KNPA) NOTAMS for possible TFRs and the Roscoe Field Airport website under the Arrivals tab for important arrival and departure information.**

Driving: From Hwy 98 turn south on Aileron Avenue and enter at the main airport entrance. Turn right at the dumpsters and follow the single-lane paved road. Just short of the blue aircraft hangars, turn left. Our white clubhouse is at the end on the left. If the main airport entrance gate is locked, continue south on Aileron Avenue to the end and turn left into the back gate. Open and close the gate behind you. Make a right once past the blue hangars. You'll see our white clubhouse at the end on the left.

For more info contact:

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Thatcher CX4 Build

EAA 485 news

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Upcoming Events
(CHAPTER EVENTS IN CAPS):

July 15-18, Pensacola Beach Air Show

July 20-26, Air Venture, Oshkosh, WI (KOSH)

Sept 16-20, National Championship Air Races, Roswell, NM (KROW)

Oct 3 – CHAPPIE JAMES ACADEMY YOUNG EAGLE FLYING

Oct 31 – FALL PUBLIC YOUNG EAGLES RALLY

November 6-7, Blue Angels Homecoming Air Show

Chapter Meetings:

Saturday, May 9th, 2026

8:30-9:30am, VMC/IMC Club Meeting.

9:45-10:30am, General Membership Meeting:

- **Pledge of Allegiance**
- **Guests**
- **Officers Reports: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer/Membership**
- **Young Eagles—Sean Londrigan**
- **Ray Scholarship—Scott Swanson**
- **Member Build Projects Update**

10:30am—Cars Depart for Tour of ST ENGINEERING, Pensacola Airport
11:15am-12:15pm—Tour led by Kevin Cropp, PSC A&P Program