Winterside Wisdom

Winter is icumen in…
Raineth drop and staineth slop,
And how the wind doth ram! 
– Ezra Pound

Pound’s parody of the medieval Cuckoo Song suggests that the worlds of poetry and piloting are not far apart. Several ASRS reporters elaborate as they share lessons learned – on the ground and in the air – during wintertime operations.

Frozen Slushy

We landed at airport just after a wet snowstorm had finished dumping approximately 2 inches of wet snow on the runway… That was a termination flight for the evening. On postflight noticed slush had blown up into wheelwell. The next morning on the walkaround the First Officer reported slush had frozen to gear doors and general area around gear. [He] reported it to the mechanic on duty. [The mechanic] said he would deice area when deice crew arrived. Area was deiced with glycol.

On missed approach, Captain got behind aircraft and climbed 500 feet above assigned altitude. The Captain’s report explained why the altitude bust occurred and affirmed the value of the crew concept:

I’d like to say something about the effects of fatigue, bad weather, and flying: they don’t mix! The day this event took place was day 3 of 4. I had gotten up after getting only 3-1/2 hours of sleep so I could drive to work… Strong surface winds, precipitation, low ceilings and visibility were present. The leg was the worst leg I have ever flown… I think the combination of fatigue, bad weather, a late close turn to intercept the localizer, a slow autopilot, a go-around from an unusual attitude, and me not being in the loop all contributed to this event.

They say a good First Officer is like gold. Thank heavens for mine on this day. CRM also played a positive role in that my First Officer pressed me diplomatically enough for me to say “Enough is enough!” That’s why there are two pilots in the cockpit.

Right Seat, Wings of Gold

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ASRS Recently Issued Alerts On…

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<tr>
<th>Alert Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Loss of GPS navigation</td>
<td>Incidents near an airport in Italy</td>
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<td>Reported hazard in B-757 cabin</td>
<td>Oxygen mask release</td>
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<td>Jet structural damage</td>
<td>Attributed to a thrown recap tire</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-300 flight control malfunction</td>
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A general aviation pilot rushed to make a VIFNO (Void If Not Off by) departure time for an IFR flight at night. Once in the clouds, he suffered a gyro failure and subsequent disorientation. He reported to ASRS that his prior instrument and simulator training were unequal to the “mechanics of the human mind” experienced during the incident:

✔ I filed an IFR flight plan. I filed and received a void clearance to depart…less than 10 minutes from the time it was issued. I quickly preflighted the aircraft, started the engine, taxied to the runway and performed a fast prop and mag check. I departed… and called Approach on climbout and heading 220… While I made radio contact with Approach, I noticed the attitude indicator showing a bank in excess of 50 degrees, while the heading indicator appeared to be spinning. I tried to roll wings level with the turn coordinator, but found myself losing altitude quickly… I was able to recover below the cloud deck and asked Approach for heading and distance to departure airport. I remained VFR and landed.

I feel several factors led to this:

✔ My accepting a clearance which left me little time to prepare the aircraft and myself for a flight in night IMC.

✔ The aircraft was probably running for 5 minutes or so after sitting outside for 2 days in 40º damp weather. This didn’t allow enough time for the gyros to completely spin up. The attitude and heading gyros are older units with many years and hours of service. These will be overhauled…

✔ Partial panel procedures. All my initial and recurrent partial panel training has been accomplished using suction cup style covers over the attitude and heading indicators. In this actual event, I found it difficult to ignore the erroneous information presented by these instruments. I found myself overcorrecting and my instrument scan diminished and was more fixation than scan. I wish there were an acceptable method of reducing vacuum to create a realistic partial panel training environment. This [would] help pilots to modify their instrument scan and ‘tune out’ the failed gyros.

✔ I found [that] my thought processes and instrument scan declined with the seriousness of the situation. When faced with unusual attitudes [at] 2,000 feet or less AGL, decision making ability suffers and thought processes narrow and become focused on one aspect of the situation instead of analyzing and evaluating the whole situation… Practicing unusual attitudes under a hood with an instructor cannot create the fear and alarm needed to enlighten the pilot on the mechanics of the human mind…

While our reporter searches for improved training aids for partial panel operations, he plans to work with an instructor on gyro failure and other emergencies.