CALLBACK ASRS

From NASA's Aviation Safety Reporting System

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The Go-Around Decision

The vast majority of approaches lead to uneventful landings, but occasionally a go-around is the right decision. Delaying the go-around to the last minute or, worse yet, attempting to "salvage" a bad approach, can lead to trouble. Generally speaking, if a go-around is a consideration, it is probably warranted. When in doubt, take it around.

Although the circumstances were different in each of the following reports to ASRS, one phrase is common to all of them— "I should have gone around."

A Blown Opportunity

This instructor pilot missed an opportunity to demonstrate the right time and place for a go-around. Instead, both pilots got a deflating lesson about Newton's First Law of Motion.

■ *My pre-solo student and I...were instructed by ATC to enter a right downwind for Runway 18. After noticing that we were slightly high on base, I called for a power reduction and lowering of the nose. Our descent angle was slightly steep and we were gaining some airspeed. After flaring on the centerline of the runway, we floated for an unusually long distance and eventually touched down. As the student applied brakes the tires started to skid, I realized that the throttle was not all the way back to idle and we were attempting to stop with power on. I suggested a go around, however the student remained on the brakes with the tires skidding. At this time I took the controls. Due to insufficient runway remaining, I reassessed the situation and, with the throttle fully out to idle, I attempted a turn onto the taxiway at the end of the runway. There was too much momentum to stop, resulting in a blown tire and the aircraft skidding onto the grass. No additional damage occurred. I should have gone around after missing the first third of the runway.*

All's Well That Ends Well- This Time

In two reports from air carrier flight crews, the landings worked out OK, but the pilots were professional enough to realize that similar circumstances may not always have the same result.

■ *ATIS reported a 2,900 foot ceiling and nine miles visibility.... We were in IMC at 6,000 feet and expecting an eight to ten mile final.... We were given a base turn and descent to 4,000 feet, then 2,000 feet. I realized we would be high and because of the early turn, deployed speed brakes to expedite the descent. The controller stated we would get the airport visually at 2,900 feet as we were descending through 3,000 feet. The Captain told the controller we were still in IMC and the controller said he would vector us through the Localizer to help us get down. We leveled at 2,000 feet and were slowing when we got turned back to the Localizer and we acquired the runway visually. We were cleared for the visual and began configuring while switching to tower about two to three miles from the field at 2,000 feet. We configured to flaps 40 degrees and landed within the first third of the runway and made the last turnoff. We were configured at 1,000 feet, but power and stabilized approach criteria were not met at 500 feet (on speed, spooled up, and on glide slope). I should have gone around! In hindsight, we got slam dunked and were behind the aircraft. The controller said we would get the field at 2,900 feet, but we barely got it at 2,000 feet. When we cleared the runway, Tower said that Approach apologized for the close-in, high and tight vector. But, we allowed ourselves to be pushed into a corner and then didn't make a go around as required. Stupid. Both the Captain and I allowed our own judgement (that we could make the landing) to override our training which called for a go around.... When we got the close-in turn, we went into "do what we have to in order to make it" mode and lost sight of company stabilized approach criteria....*

■ *During the approach we had visual contact with the airport. At about four miles the runway was in sight. There was no turbulence or rain. Tower advised that there was a microburst on Runway 27. About one mile out, we encountered moderate rain for about 15 seconds. I thought the previous aircraft had landed, so I continued as no turbulence or wind shear conditions were being experienced.... I elected to leave flaps at 15 degrees in case a go around was conducted (normal landing is 30 degrees flaps). Just as I flared for landing, we began to experience a strong crosswind from the right.... The aircraft wanted to drift left during rollout. As we slowed, control was regained and we taxied off the runway to the ramp. Later, another company pilot (who was waiting to take off) told me that the preceding and following aircraft had gone around. As mentioned, I believed the preceding aircraft had landed. In hindsight, I should have gone around and waited for better weather conditions.... This incident (although turning out OK) could have been serious.... The safer course would have been to go around. All I can say is, I regret my actions and will not hesitate performing a go-around next time....*

A Noteworthy Landing

While the proximity of a parallel taxiway saved this C152 pilot from an expensive lesson about distractions on final, a go-around would have prevented any need for an alternate landing area.

■ *On final approach for Runway 5, I was looking down at my notes to see where the FBO (Fixed Base Operator) was and what ground frequency I had to use once I landed. When I looked up, I noticed that I was drifting to the right side of the runway. Instead of landing on the edge of the runway and on top of the runway lights, I added full power and raised the nose up a little. I continued to drift to the right and landed on the taxiway. I should have gone around. Lesson learned: land the airplane first, then check the ground frequency and FBO.*

ASRS Recently Issued Alerts On…
MD80 loss of cabin pressure
ERJ135 loss of rudder control
Northwestern U.S. airport approach path obstacles
B757 shattered windshield due to electrical overheat
Southern U.S. airport similar sounding approach fixes

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March 2004 Report Intake	
Air Carrier / Air Taxi Pilots	2473
General Aviation Pilots	901
Controllers	44
Cabin/Mechanics/Military/Other	115
TOTAL	**3533**

Dysfunctional Dialog

A sampling of recent ASRS reports indicates that non-standard phraseology and misinterpreted communications continue to be cited as contributing factors in many incidents. While they cannot address every situation, the Controller's Handbook (7110.65) and the Airman's Information Manual provide standardized phraseology that could help eliminate many communication errors.

Following Instructions

Although they were not specifically "cleared" for a visual approach, this B737 flight crew was led astray by a clearance that left some room for interpretation.

■ *Approach asked if we had [destination] in sight. The First Officer (pilot flying) pointed to the airport. I told Approach that the airport was in sight. The controller then asked if we had visual contact with another air carrier at our one o'clock position, six miles. The First Officer pointed to the traffic and said, "In sight." I saw the traffic and reported, "Traffic in sight" to Approach. The controller then said, "[Company flight number], follow the traffic for the visual to Runway 29." As we started out of our assigned altitude, Approach issued a clearance to 5,000 feet. My response was, "I thought you cleared us for the visual to Runway 29." The controller pointed out that he wanted us to follow the other carrier. Since our altitude had not really changed before the descent clearance was issued, we did not deviate from our clearance. However, we would have. Although technically correct, the controller's use of unusual, if not "non-standard" phraseology could have caused a serious altitude deviation.... The controller should have said, "Follow [the other carrier], maintain 7,000 feet."*

Crossing the Line

The clearance given to this C172 instructor pilot and student may have been misleading, but the time to clear up any confusion was before crossing the hold short line.

■ *After completing our run-up, we taxied to the hold short line of Runway 16. My student was at the controls in the left seat. He called the tower saying "Skyhawk holding short Runway 16, ready for takeoff." The tower replied, "Skyhawk, taxi up and hold." I thought the tower meant taxi into position and hold...and we crossed the hold short line. Tower then told us to stop and clear the runway. We complied immediately, but the inbound plane elected to go around. Factors contributing to this incident were the use of non-standard phraseology by the tower, and my failure to verify whether he meant "hold short" or "taxi into position and hold." To avoid this type of situation in the future, I will always ask if I am not sure of a clearance, especially before entering the active runway.*

U-Turn? No, You Turn

Clear, concise communications are usually preferred over lengthy conversations. In the case of this flight attendant's request, however, a few additional words could have prevented the Captain's misinterpretation.

■ *Prior to engine start, company procedure requires securing the cockpit door. This procedure was followed and the door indicated "locked." During climb out, the flight attendant called the flight deck. The Captain answered and after a brief conversation, he instructed me to level the aircraft and prepare to return to [departure airport] due to a disturbance in the cabin. During the descent, the Captain assumed control of the aircraft. As we were nearing [destination], the flight attendant called the flight deck to ask if we were landing. I replied that we were. The Captain took this opportunity to get additional information regarding the situation in the cabin. She advised him that the only problem was that the cockpit door was open. The door was then secured and the flight continued to its original destination. Apparently in her initial report to the Captain, the flight attendant had simply stated, "Turn around." Her intent was for the Captain to see the open door, but the Captain perceived her comment to mean that the flight was in jeopardy and the aircraft should be turned around and returned to [departure airport].*

Gone West

It is with great sadness that we relate the death of Captain Rex Hardy, the founding editor of Callback. Rex was 88 when he passed away on April 7 at his home in Monterey, CA.

Rex Hardy was a decorated Naval Aviator, test pilot for Northrop Aviation, and Chief Pilot at Lockheed before joining the team at NASA's Aviation Safety Reporting System. Rex published the first issue of Callback in July, 1979 with the intent to provide an "interesting, instructive, and even-sometimes-entertaining" safety bulletin. Callback's continuing contribution to aviation safety is the result of Rex Hardy's vision, originality, and determination.