

Too Many Toos

I was working in the hangar couple of weeks ago trying to chip away at the never-ending list of hangar and airplane projects. It was a beautiful day, but I had things that needed to be done and decided to work on them.

Of course, I was running late, and it was late morning before I got to the hangar. One of the airport regulars stopped by for the "How are you doing, what are you working on?" conversation, and before I knew it it was lunchtime. My Sweetie had fixed me a great lunch, so I sat down to eat. Now it's early afternoon and I'm getting frustrated because most of the day has gotten by me and I haven't accomplished anything yet. "So, stop whining and get to work", I said to myself and that's exactly what I did. Airplane project priority number one quickly revealed a lack of the correct parts, but only after several screws were dropped, which of course, rolled under the rear seat where they are next to impossible to see and retrieve. Screws retrieved and parts on order, I set my sights on a hangar project that I had been putting off for months. On short order I figured out (of course) that I had neither the correct parts nor the correct tools for that one. Now it's late afternoon/early evening and I am hot, frustrated, and tired.

To heck with it I thought - I'm going flying. It was still a warm, but pretty day and I thought that at least this day wouldn't be a total bust. I called home, told my wife I was headed out, and jumped on the tug. Which was out of gas. Of course it was. On my way to the gas pump I noticed a bit of wind picking up, mostly a crosswind. Not beyond limits, but enough to be interesting. As I was fueling the tug, I shot another glance at the windsock (no change) and noticed that the warm Texas sun was beginning to cast some longer shadows. I took my flight suit off, put my tools away, swept the hangar floor a bit, and went home.

"How was your flight?" I heard as I eased through the back door. "Didn't go". "Why not, it's such a beautiful day?" "I don't know - too hot, too tired, too distracted, too dehydrated, too frustrated, too much wind, too much in the wrong frame of mind". "Sounds to me like there were just too many toos." My wife has a way of putting things very succinctly. And she was right - there were just too many "toos".

If you were at NWOC last winter or read his article in the Summer issue of "Skylines" you are familiar with Rusty Lowry's Warbird Operational Risk Assessment Checklist (WORA). It is a great tool and I recommend that you use it. But on this particular day I did not use a formal risk assessment tool. I assessed the risk the same way we humans have been doing it for hundreds of thousands of years. I simply listened to that little voice in my head, that slightly gnawing feeling in my stomach, that said, "This is quickly becoming not such a good idea." Indeed, there were just too many "toos".

So, use a formal risk assessment tool like the WORA checklist or the FAA's "I'M SAFE" checklist

https://www.faa.gov/news/safety_briefing/2015/media/SE_Topic_15_03.pdf)
when it's appropriate **AND** always do a gut check. Listen to that voice. It's most often right.

Be Safe.

John