

Tips for Safe Ground Operations

Flying is an adventure and a continuous learning experience. It's so exciting and amazing to view the world from up above. Of course, safety in the air is your primary concern and responsibility. But have you thought about safety on the ground while getting to and from the runway? Many aviation accidents and incidents are due to poor procedures and lack of situational awareness before we even get airborne.

Let's start with one of the most important things you can do: print and carry (even laminate for your home airport) an airport diagram for all airports you will be using. Now that is a good start. But even better, is to study that diagram **on the ground before you even start the engine** and practice taxi scenarios to the different runways. Become familiar with the taxiways to each of the runways. Think about and review which sequence of taxiways take you to each runway. Review and think about possible runways you may need to cross enroute to the active runway. **Be aware that Tower must instruct you to cross any runway.**

Also become familiar with "Hot Spots." The FAA has identified these for many airports. They are places on the airport that can be potential causes for Runway Incursions. Runway Incursions are situations where an aircraft, vehicle, or pedestrian enters the runway, causing the potential for an incident or accident. Study the airport diagram and look for these Hot Spots before you begin taxiing.

Once your preflight is done and you are ready to board, do a last walk around and check the ramp for obstructions and **make sure the tow bar is not attached to the aircraft!!!**

If you are carrying passengers, remember to brief them. Your briefing should include instructions on seatbelt and door operations (Don't be afraid to tell them that they need to know these operations in case of an unlikely, but possible emergency landing situation). A very important part of your briefing should be instructions on sterile cockpit while taxiing and until clear of the airspace. Make sure you adhere to this practice. Many accidents and incidents have been caused by conversations, texting, cell phone use, or other distractions during taxi operations.

When you are ready to begin taxiing, have your airport diagram in front of you, as well as paper to copy your ATIS and your taxi clearance. Once you have obtained the ATIS, you should have a good idea which runway you will be taxiing to. However, if the wind is light, you may be instructed to taxi to a different runway than was advertised on ATIS. That is why it is important to have studied the runway diagram ahead of time. When you call Ground, it should sound like this: "Anoka Ground, Cessna 79567, east side with Juliet, taxi for a north (give direction of flight) departure." As Ground gives you the taxi clearance, write it down (use just the first letter of the phonetic word and a symbol for "cross" or "hold short" of any runway). Then read back the clearance. Do not move until you clearly understand where you are going. Trace the route on the diagram with your finger. Turn on your landing or taxi light. Now you are ready to taxi.

Use no more than 1000 RPM during your taxi. That way you shouldn't have to ride the brakes. Your taxi speed should be no more than a brisk walk. During the winter months, when the taxiways are slippery,

use extreme caution. Pay attention to wing clearances above snowbanks, watch for other obstructions on the ramps, and along the way. Lead the turns at intersections by slowing down way ahead of time. Make it a practice to visually look left, right, ahead, and call out, "clear left, clear right, clear ahead" before turning or crossing. Refer to your taxi clearance as you move along.

Pay attention to the airport signage along your route. (A good review of those signs in the AIM is valuable). A red sign (approaching a runway) is a reminder to you that you must have been given permission to cross that runway. If you haven't been given permission, you must stay behind the Hold Short Lines. As you hold short, or prior to crossing, again, visually check left, check right, check ahead. If you can't remember whether you were told to cross the runway, **stop and ask**.

Listen and monitor the ground frequency as you are taxiing. Be aware of other aircraft that call Ground for taxi clearance. That way you have situational awareness of what is going on.

As you approach the runup area, be aware and considerate of other aircraft. Leave enough space for other airplanes to position. (In other words, don't take your half out of the middle, if possible). Also be aware of condition of the area. If it is icy, you will need to take precautions to ensure that you do not slide into another aircraft. You will also need to be aware of whether your brakes are holding you as you do the runup. **Make sure you keep looking outside periodically as you go through the checklist, so you notice if you start rolling.**

Once your runup is complete, visually check the runup area and approach to runup area for other aircraft to see if someone else might be ready ahead of you before you move. Once you have determined that you can move to the runway hold short line, switch to Tower, taxi to the line and **turn the airplane to a 45* angle to the final approach. Look out on final before you call the Tower for takeoff clearance.** If there is an aircraft on final or close base, **wait** to call Tower for clearance. Tower is just going to tell you to hold short until the traffic lands. Once the plane crosses in front of you, then call for clearance. You will most likely be given a "Line Up and Wait" instruction. Once "Cleared for Takeoff" is heard, you are FINALLY ready to launch and enjoy the sights from above!!!

Happy and SAFE flying!!!

Cheryl