



## PRESS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### Mountain flying safety considerations for pilots

(Lake Tahoe, NV) When flying in the mountains, pilots have to be aware of several factors in order to insure safe flight.

For more information about mountain flying safety, survival tips and winter safety checklists, flying in severe weather, icing conditions and considerations for flight safety log on to:

[www.flightsafetycounselor.com](http://www.flightsafetycounselor.com)

First, weather in the mountains is always a critical factor, especially in the winter when winds can reach speeds of over 100 mph over the ridge tops and through the many mountain passes even though the winds at the surface may be only 25 mph. This produces not only up and down drafts, but wind shear and turbulence. Pilots not experienced in mountain flying become very uncomfortable in mountain turbulence that at times can become severe causing loss of control.

When winds are strong at altitude and on the ground, there is always a chance of wind shear on final approach to landing. This creates a problem in that if an aircraft is flying at 80 mph into a wind of 40 mph on final approach to landing and the wind shears (changes direction from a head wind to a tail wind) the airspeed is reduced to 40 mph and the aircraft will either stall or be very close to a stall unless quick action is taken by the pilot to add full power and establish a higher speed. Click here for more information on how to escape downdrafts and fly in severe crosswinds:

[www.flightsafetycounselor.com/mntfly.htm](http://www.flightsafetycounselor.com/mntfly.htm)

Cloud cover is another factor to consider when the weather is stormy. In many instances, mountain peaks are obscured by the clouds thus limiting the view of the mountaintops. Ground fog is also a consideration as much of the fog that develops in mountain valleys is not thick, so pilots flying over the top of it can see the ground below. But, when it comes time to land and the aircraft has to penetrate the fog, visibilities can be reduced to almost zero.

Many pilots have flown over airports that had ground fog and were able to observe the runway. But when they descended into the fog for landing, they lost sight of the ground and the airport and crashed. This is called a CFIT accident or Controlled Flight Into Terrain. There is no excuse for a CFIT accident. If a pilot cannot see where he/she is going, they shouldn't go.

If there is precipitation or if the aircraft is in the clouds and the temperatures are below freezing, there is always a chance of the aircraft surfaces developing ice. Ice is bad in that it reduces the ability of the wings to develop lift and at the same time increases the weight of the aircraft, sometimes to a point well above the authorized gross weight of the aircraft.



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These are not all of the factors to consider, but a few that play a prominent role in aircraft accidents in mountainous terrain. Weather is a major cause of general aviation accidents. Pilots need to be aware that weather in the mountains can change rapidly. Preflight planning is always a must for pilots flying in the mountains. Click here for additional information on preflight planning and takeoff procedures for mountain flying: [www.flightsafetycounselor.com/mntfly.htm](http://www.flightsafetycounselor.com/mntfly.htm)

Summary of mountain flying considerations for pilots:

- Be aware of icing conditions both at flight altitude and on the ground
- Do not takeoff with any frost or ice on any surface of the aircraft
- Know the weather conditions on the ground at the airport you are flying into
- Be aware of wind conditions on the ground, they can affect your landing speeds
- Be aware of precipitation in the air and on the ground especially when freezing conditions exist
- Be aware of mountain peaks, they can become obscured by clouds
- Be aware of cloud conditions and dew points for potential fog conditions
- Be aware of your particular aircraft characteristics such as weights and balance, payloads, gross weights and landing weights, consider the weight of your fuel onboard
- Consider the balance of the plane when loading passengers, fuel and baggage.
- When flying in the mountains load your plane at least 10% below maximum gross weight
- Always file a flight plan.
- Always close a flight plan when you arrive at your destination.
- Know the weather and the terrain you are flying over.
- Always have a Plan B, alternate route or alternate landing location
- If it is not safe for you and your passengers, do not fly.
- Weather is a major cause of general aviation accidents

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Bill Schroeder was the first Master Certified Flight Instructor in Nevada and has been flying in the Lake Tahoe/Sierra Nevada region for 40 years. He is the Chief Check Pilot for the Nevada Wing of the Civil Air Patrol and chief instructor of mountain flying training courses. In addition, Bill serves as an FAA Aviation Safety Counselor for the Western Pacific Region out of the Reno Flight Standards District Office and is a member of the FAA National Instructor Safety Council. He holds a Master of Science Degree, ATP-ME, MEL, SEL, CFI and CFII. He gives private instruction in the Reno-Lake Tahoe area. He can be reached by e-mail at [checkpilot@thegrid.net](mailto:checkpilot@thegrid.net). You can view his web site at [www.flightsafetycounselor.com](http://www.flightsafetycounselor.com)