

## Fresh Air Matters... with Capt. Yaw

This week I feel compelled to give a 'mini-lesson' on 'cruise checks'. This is nothing to do with writing out a monetary promise in return for a really nice holiday on a boat or so that one can cruise around the country on our wonderfully religious roads (you know, the hole-iest ones).

No, this is about safety. Pilots carry out 'checks' before they get in their planes, before they start, before this, during that, etc., etc. We may have printed checklists to work from, but in open cockpit aircraft, such as we fly at Kpong, the use of mnemonics as in the days of early aviation is essential. We have the TFGMHCS check, the BUMFITCH check, HASSEL, ABC, etc.

We also have the '6-minute' FREDA check. This is the check carried out every six minutes during the 'cruise' and is probably the most carried out check in light aviation. It is really important and keeps us on track and in the air! So what does FREDA stand for?

**F** stands for Fuel – it is time to check the fuel remaining and ensure that the fuel burn is as expected as well as to ask the question – 'do I still have enough to make it to my destination?' **R** is for Radio – is it tuned to the correct communications frequency and should a call – report or request - be made. **E** designates Engine – check the power setting, temperatures, pressures and listen to the sound of the power-plant. You may need to consider if the engine needs 'warming' on a long descent too. **D** reminds us of Direction – do we know where we are and are we [still] going in the right direction, if not we need to make some corrections! Finally, **A** represents Airframe, Altitude and Attitude - let us take them one at a time! Airframe is the aircraft itself, a safety look at the wings, the flaps, cowlings and all the bits we can see – is the machine as it should be. Altitude is about how far off of the surface of the planet we are in relation to mean sea level, but we also consider how far above the nearest hill, tower, etc., it is really about being clear of the terrain and terrestrial obstacles, as well as being well below/above airspace that we are not cleared to enter. Attitude has two meanings – the one you are probably thinking of in regards to the state of mind of the pilot – are we still in 'pilot-mode'. In aviation we also have the attitude of the aircraft itself. Of course, aircraft cannot get moody (can they?) and so this refers to a 'nose-up' or climb-attitude, 'nose-down' or descent-attitude, wing-up or bank-attitude or the most regular 'straight and level' attitude of the aircraft in the air.

These six-minute checks are second nature to the seasoned pilot – a sort of built in six-minute timer tickles the consciousness and the checks are carried out with the regularity of breathing – an essential thing to do for good health! When learning to fly the FREDA is something to become familiar with – a conscious effort must be made to remember it. It is interesting that when on a long cross-country flight, particularly over water, the FREDA check seems to be carried out much more often. Knowing your FREDA is done, you know that you are on track, safe and capable of continuing safely. FREDA is my friend – and not just in the cockpit.

I recently drove from Kpong to Accra with some youngsters who are learning to fly – and we carried out FREDA checks in the car. We also worked on distance, speed and time calculations. The trip seemed to only take a few minutes, because we were busy, and all the time conscious of the safety of the vehicle and our surroundings. Every six-minutes (I used a stop-watch), we took a moment to check the fuel; listen to the engine; confirm we were still on the right road and where exactly we were; called out our altitude as two feet above the road (that way we knew we did not have a puncture); looked around the car for its condition; etc. It was a little out of context – but not without merit.

I am sure that we could develop our own FREDAs for our business operations. For example; **F** could be for funds. Is there enough money in the bank and coming in to meet the deadlines. If not, we need to carry out some change of plan to avoid running out of funds over 'hostile terrain'. **R** may be for reporting. Regular reports provide information to management. In the same way as radio calls provide communication in our aircraft, reports from different activities indicate and communicate the status of our company. It actually amazes me that more companies are not using statistical analysis to monitor trends – and such reports may make the pseudo-pilot of the organisation more aware of trends. **E** has to be for energy. Any operation without energy is in trouble. Whether it is electrical power for running lights and computers or petrol for the vehicles in the company fleet or indeed the enthusiastic energy of the employees to keep the wheels of the day-to-day operations running smoothly – energy is fundamental to business momentum.

**D** must still indicate direction. In flight we have a map – and a path drawn on that map indicating our plan. Every company should have a plan showing where it has come from and where it is going. Knowing where we are in relation to where we came from and where we are heading towards is an essential part of achieving relevant success. Making deviations from a plan are normal and totally essential for safety and other logical reasons – but we need to know how far we have deviated, why and how to get back on track as soon as possible.

The **A** is not to be left out either. Airframe is similar to building infrastructure – so **A** could be used to represent Architecture. A bit of a stretch of the imagination, but please indulge me. Are all of the buildings and other constructions put to the best of uses and are they serviceable, presentable and well maintained. Attitude is as important on the ground as in the air. Having the right attitude towards self, staff, supplies and clients is as important as the attitude of the business. Is the business climbing or descending!! As for the Altitude component, we need to make sure that the business remains clear of obstacles that can be avoided – and that needs a constant lookout and avoidance manoeuvres!

Well, I guess that this week we can all fly our businesses, fly our families and fly our personal lives with good six-minute checks and constant awareness of the safety of our 'ship' whatever it is and wherever it is going. Remember, 'Safety is NO accident!' and FREDAs need to be carried out regularly to help ensure that!

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