



CHOCK TALK

Newsletter of the Blue Sky Flying Club, est. 1957

The “C” in PIC by Alex Sack

Do you remember 91.3(a)?

If not, let me refresh your memory: “The pilot in command of an aircraft is directly responsible for, and is the final authority as to, the operation of that aircraft.”

On face value, this reg seems straight forward: You have the final say on the operation of your aircraft. You’re the boss. Simple, right? I used to think that. Not anymore. Let me explain.

The “C” in PIC carries a whole slew of responsibilities beyond just physically operating your aircraft, including a wide range of topics from situational awareness to ADM, to cockpit resource management. It dictates what I call the “C-Skills”.



When I started primary training, my CFI was mainly focused on developing my “P-Skills” – learning to actually fly the plane. But once I got the physical act of flying down, my training transitioned into developing the “C-Skills”...recognizing and dealing with emergencies, using correct phraseology on the radio, and probably the most important one (at least early on), building situational awareness in the traffic pattern. Looking back now, I realize that, while I knew how to fly the plane after only a few hours of training, my CFI rightly understood that my “C-Skills” were still not solo-worthy; I just needed more time in the plane to develop them.

The truth is you don’t really get to develop and hone your “C-Skills” until after you get your license, which can be eye-opening too. For example, do you remember your first real cross country? Not the one you meticulously planned with your CFI, but that incredible day trip you planned with friends or family – all by yourself? That one! I’ll bet during that trip, you looked over to the right seat and wanted to ask your CFI a question; I know I sure did. And that is the exact moment where 91.3(a) kicks in: It’s you up there, no one else; you’re “in command” even if you don’t feel that way! Not so simple anymore.

During my primary and instrument training, and even through my commercial, most of the time I was solely focused on the “P” side of the PIC equation. Recently, I’ve begun to understand that I now have to use all these newly acquired “P-Skills” to develop my “C” ones. But how?

Well, I’ve found that a good starting place is in my pre-flight. For example, now when I plan a trip with family and/or friends, “direct” is rarely an option; I want airports underneath me in case I have to get down for whatever reason.

Another way I work my “C-Skills” is briefing passengers: A lot of times I have non-pilot passengers, so I set expectations accordingly regarding turbulence, the radio, and even cabin air. It makes for a more enjoyable flight for all.

PIC ... I also now realize that ATC communication is truly a bi-directional affair: You need to speak up immediately if you don't understand the controller. My mantra is when in doubt, ask. Full stop. Don't be embarrassed, be safe.

On the flip side, don't let ATC bully you. New York controllers are notorious for asking you to cancel in the air when that may not be the safest solution. You have every right to cancel on the ground. Exercise it.


The irony is that when I first started flying, I treated 91.3(a) as a mere trifle, only to be regurgitated verbatim during an oral. But now, as I accrue more hours, I find it to be one of the most important regulations in all of Part 91. And being "in command" is as much a skill as it is a responsibility, and one that I hope to improve on every flight.

“How's Your Ride?” The sensation of bumpiness is subjective. One pilot may refer to it as “moderate turbulence”, while another calls it “light chop”. Additionally, different airplanes “ride” differently - especially based on the weight. “Moderate chop” in a heavy will be a whole different game in 2SP.

The FAA defines the intensity of turbulence as follows:

- **Light Chop:** Slight, rapid, and somewhat rhythmic bumpiness without appreciable changes in altitude or attitude.
- **Light Turbulence:** Slight, erratic changes in altitude and/or attitude. Occupants may feel a slight strain against seatbelts. Unsecured objects may be displaced slightly.
- **Moderate Chop:** Rapid bumps or jolts without appreciable changes in aircraft altitude or attitude.
- **Moderate Turbulence:** Changes in altitude and/or attitude occur but the aircraft remains in positive control at all times. It usually causes variations in indicated airspeed.
- **Severe:** Large, abrupt changes in altitude and/or attitude. Usually causes large variations in indicated airspeed. Aircraft may be momentarily out of control. Occupants are forced violently against seatbelts. Unsecured objects are tossed about.
- **Extreme:** Aircraft is violently tossed about and is practically impossible to control. May cause structural damage.

Lean and Mean... In our continued effort to both treat our engines better and save fuel, it is imperative that we all know and understand the basics of proper engine management. Handy and easy-to-use performance charts are in all three cockpits - right next to the checklists. A few months ago this AOPA article covered all the basics in a great recap of what we all need to keep in mind aloft. It's right here: [Lean Article](#) Separately (but related) - anybody who has flown our Skylane knows that it's prone to high temps. Recently Dennis Sullivan sent out his method for dealing with it. Try it. Use it. It works: Initial climb 85-90 kts to 1000'agl, then set climb power 23"/2400 rpm and lower the nose to 100-105 kts. At cruise, use the chart and lean to 65%. (All of this is terrain permitting, obviously.)



Skyhawk Avionics N642SP is in the shop (and has been for too long!). But, as they say: “Stuff happens.” Our maintenance shop at N51 has had a couple setbacks - a car accident and some back problems. This has pushed back delivery day... currently planned for April 7.

When it rolls out of the hangar, it will have a fresh annual, a newly overhauled engine, and some (but not all) of the new avionics.

We’re calling this “Phase One”. Here’s what will be installed: a GTN650 navigator (used but warranted), a new GFC-500 autopilot, a new GMA 350c audio panel, and a new G5 PFD. Our existing GNS 430W will slide down to the #2 radio position and we will keep our existing transponder - but only until “Phase Two”.

Phase Two depends on the delivery of our new G3X Touch display and a new GTX 345 transponder, both of which are backordered. Garmin tells us: “mid-May”. As much advance-work as possible is being done now in order to shorten the downtime for the next hangar visit. The G5 that is being installed now as a PFD will be relocated and become our standby instrument, which will enable removal of the vacuum system.

When all is said and done, the avionics rack will be nearly identical to 58H.

Skyhawk Training Requirements. In order to familiarize those who are not “Skylane-current”, we have come up with some simple training requirements for the new Skyhawk avionics. If you’re already checked out in the Skylane and the Skyhawk - nothing to do...hop in and fly. OTOH, if you’re one of the 17 members who does *not* fall into that category there will be some simple training required. Since the installation is in two phases, the training will also be in two phases so nobody has to wait. Remember, we recently bought a GPU, which will help save you \$\$ by not running the engine. Standby for more info...coming soon.

Wash and Wax - Save the Date - Saturday May 13

“Many hands make light work.” It’s that time again - Bring your kids, bring your dogs, bring your buckets, brushes, and rubber gloves. If the weather does not cooperate we will try again the next day - Sunday.

Trivia Recently I was wasting time and bumped into a map of aviation weather cams around the country. Our neighbor - Sky Manor has one! It’s the only one for hundreds of miles. Heading northeast, you’d have to go to Maine before you found one and heading southwest, you’d go as far as Mississippi. **Check it out.**

NEWS YOU CAN USE
Next Membership Meeting

Monday, April 3, 7:30 p.m.
Calvary Baptist Church

*Safety Presentation: **Skyhawk Avionics Upgrade - Phase One***
Roger Harris

Fuel Prices (ranked in order of price)
(It helps your club when you buy it cheap!)

- Central Jersey \$5.25
- Sky Manor \$5.46
- Solberg \$5.54 (Must use the Phillips card)

