

# Passenger Safety Briefings

*They must cover seat belts, but you're free to go beyond that minimum. There's no such thing as too much information.* / BY JOSEPH E. (JEB) BURNSIDE

**S**it down, shut up and hold on" might work as a passenger briefing in an action movie, but in the physical world, it falls short of adequate. Or even legal, for that matter.

The FAR in question is 91.107, *Use of safety belts, shoulder harnesses, and child restraint systems*. Its only real requirement is that, before takeoff, "each person on board is briefed on how to fasten and unfasten that person's safety belt and, if installed, shoulder harness." That's it for Part 91 operators. (If you're flying 135 and/or 121, see FARs 135.177 and 121.571.)

The good news is that, for the most part, there's no limit to how far beyond that bare minimum we can go. But we also could come up with a plan, or maybe even a passenger briefing checklist.

Hoodathunkit?

## **'...in your seatback pocket...'**

A quick and easy way to not only comply with the FAR but also manufacturer recommendations

is to use their documentation. Many manufacturers will furnish passenger briefing cards tailored to the make and model you're flying. That documentation exists for commercial operators who can't go wrong using the manufacturer's material. Unless you're flying an experimental, there's likely an FAA- or manufacturer-approved document similar to what can be found on the pocket of the seat in front of you when aboard a human mailing tube. An example of one published by Beechcraft is at lower right on the opposite page.

If you're strictly a not-for-hire operation and have some spare time, it's easy enough to roll your own laminated preflight briefing tailored for passengers. It's even easier to simply type some stuff into your EFB's checklist function and read it off to passengers—you do have to remember to use it, however. If you have the time/talent, create your own passenger briefing video and play it back on your iPad.

Back in the day when we still used paper to brief, plan and file our flights, the web site [fltplan.com](http://fltplan.com) had a handy feature: You could use the basic data in your flight plan to create and print a "welcome aboard" handout answering some of the basic passenger questions, including the flight's planned elapsed time and ETA at the destination. The site, which was acquired by Garmin in 2018, now offers an app for both iOS and Android devices, and still has the passenger briefing feature. You'll need a printer, though, and to include any other necessary passenger briefing items, like seatbelts, in your template.

## **Keep It Simple? It Depends**

The sit down/shut up/hold on briefing has a lot going for it, aside from the seatbelt issue, of course. But there's a time and place for everything, and we're responsible pilots who respect our passengers. Right? Right. So we need to offer more in the way of safety, information and detail. How much more of these three broad topics we provide depends on who the passengers are.

An easy example is the family member who's been flying with

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*These folks look like they could use a good passenger safety briefing.*

*The passenger safety briefing described in the table at right is adapted from the July/August 2014 issue of the FAA Safety Briefing. As such, it comes with the agency's stamp of approval. Feel free to embellish or condense it to suit your needs.*

Passenger Safety Briefing	
S A F E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Seat belts fastened for taxi, takeoff, landing</li> <li>▶ Shoulder harnesses fastened for takeoff, landing</li> <li>▶ Seat position adjusted and locked in place</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Air vents/environmental controls: location and operation</li> <li>▶ Action in event of passenger discomfort</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Fire extinguisher location and operation</li> </ul>
E T Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Exit door security and how to open</li> <li>▶ Emergency evacuation plan</li> <li>▶ Emergency/survival kit location and contents</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Traffic scanning/spotting/notification</li> <li>▶ Talking (sterile cockpit procedures)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Your questions</li> </ul>

you since before they could walk. They already know the drill and a simple, "Any questions?" can suffice. It can reasonably be argued that a family member's preflight briefing has been going on for years. At the other extreme might be your mother-in-law's first flight in a personal airplane. Or an FAA inspector doing their job. In both of these cases, you'll want to gild the lily a bit. So, the content and extent of a passenger briefing ideally would be tailored to the audience and fall somewhere between those extremes.

It obviously should be tailored to the specific airplane. The briefing card reproduced at lower right offers some reasons why, at least when compared with my Debonair, the same basic make and model. One difference between the card and my airplane is not the door handle description—it's spot-on. But my airplane does not have the mid-cabin window exits; the example on the card describes middle cabin windows that are openable, and hinged at the top. Mine aren't, and it's unlikely one would be able to kick out one of them. As one result, the exit route depictions are wrong; there's only one way out of my airplane, though the cabin door.

But the Bonanza briefing card also omits another cabin exit: the baggage door. In a pinch, it might be the only way out, and I've seen some airplanes with internal latches added to their baggage doors for exactly that reason. Of course, internal access to the baggage door may be blocked by, well, baggage. Accessing that door from the inside is one more reason it makes sense to pack your gear in a few small bags instead of one steamer trunk when traveling by personal airplane.

**First-Timers Are Different**

Some things that are obvious to a pilot or frequent passenger may not resonate at all with someone who's never been in a personal airplane. Let's start with

where to walk when boarding a typical low-wing single and what to hold onto as they climb up on the wing. Once seated, make sure seat belts are identified and secured, the seats themselves adjusted, headsets untangled and checked for operation.

One thing many pilots forget is that the first-timer in your right seat may not understand what the pedals on the floor are for, nor what he or she should hold onto. Those answers need to be clearly explained. Moreover, that passenger must not stretch their legs

Beechcraft

**READ OTHER SIDE ALSO**

**EMERGENCY EXITS**

**DOOR**

1. DEPRESS LOCK BUTTON AND HOLD
2. ROTATE HANDLE CLOCKWISE
3. PUSH DOOR OPEN

**WINDOW EXIT**

OR

1. LIFT LATCH
2. PULL PIN
3. PUSH WINDOW OUT

**WINDOW EXIT**

1. REMOVE COVER
2. ROTATE HANDLE UP
3. PUSH WINDOW OUT

**OXYGEN MASKS LOCATIONS IF EQUIPPED**

**EXIT ROUTES INCLUDING WINDOW EXITS IF EQUIPPED**

**EMERGENCY BRACING POSITIONS**

FRONT FACING SEATS WITH SHOULDER HARNESS

- HEADREST FULLY EXTENDED
- SEAT UPRIGHT
- CHIN ON CHEST
- HANDS CLASPED TOGETHER ACROSS MIDDLE

WITHOUT SHOULDER HARNESS

- UPPER BODY LEANING FORWARD
- HANDS COVERING FACE

98-38441B **BONANZA 33s, 35s - BARON 55s** Oct 1980

## Special Equipment

Depending on your mission, you may have flotation devices or even a life raft aboard. Both should be part of your passenger briefing if flying over water. Donning and securing a personal flotation device in open water is difficult at best for an untrained passenger, so they should be wearing them at touchdown and inflate them only after egressing the aircraft. Same for you.

Meanwhile, a life raft doesn't do much good if it goes down with the aircraft under a mountain of baggage. It needs to be the first thing out the door, and tethered to the aircraft or someone.

Whether over land or water, a personal locator beacon (PLB) can be a worthwhile addition to your airborne equipment. Think of a PLB as a portable ELT, but with the possibility of other optional features, including flight tracking and texting. Again, a PLB doesn't do much good at the bottom of a lake, so it, too, should go out the door earlier instead of later.

If you're flying an unpressurized aircraft, passengers may need to be briefed on supplemental oxygen and associated equipment. Of course, supplemental O<sub>2</sub> only has to be provided to passengers above 15,000 feet cabin pressure altitude, according to FAR 91.211; it doesn't have to be used.

All of this equipment may be completely foreign to your passengers. While they and you likely won't need any special equipment on a given flight, conditions may warrant identifying and explaining how to use this and other gear before it's needed.



and interfere with the pedals, nor grab the yoke for leverage to move their seat up.

In many airplanes, that passenger also is going to be sitting by a cabin door, perhaps the only one. He or she must be shown how to open it, and demonstrate their understanding for me. I also tell them not to use the door handle for leveraging a new sitting position—just leave it alone and it'll leave you alone. And I really don't like it much when a passenger leans against the cabin door. I like it even less when they open their storm window without inquiring.

Your airplane likely will have other "features" you'll want to point out. Taller passengers will appreciate warnings about Cessna's forehead-denting aileron trailing edges, for example, and most will appreciate knowing where the Sic-Sacs and first-aid kit are.

One other item certain pilots may want to cover is how to deploy their airframe parachute and/or autoland systems. They also may not want to brief passengers about either system at all. The manufacturers and type clubs likely have thought about what

pilots should tell their passengers when either system is installed to guard against a passenger who panics and pulls the handle or pushes the button against the pilot's wishes. I'd be interested to learn about any guidance on passenger briefings among this community.

### Down And Out

One thing I always add to a passenger briefing is what do if the airplane lands on something that isn't a runway. In the Debonair, there's really only one way out—through the cabin door. I tell them that once the airplane comes to a stop at the accident site, open the door, release the shoulder harness and get out of the airplane. Once outside, move away from it laterally, if possible.

I also tell them if they stop to ask a question they'll be talking to themselves, because I will have crawled over them to the outside by then.

It's imperative that the passenger sitting next to the door knows how to open it and get away, especially if there are rear-seat passengers. In fact, rear-seat passengers

should get a different briefing, to include pushing forward on the seatback in front of them to gain access to the door handle if the right-seat passenger can't.

What to do after an off-airport landing and/or accident is at least one article by itself. But whatever equipment you carry and however simple it may be to deploy, if a passenger doesn't know about it, it's useless.

### Putting It All Together

Think about what to tell your passengers. Each one has a different background and expectation. Your job is to not only get them back on the ground safely but to also make it pleasant experience. That's hard to do if they aren't briefed on what to do, what not to do and how they can help. There are a lot of pilot/passenger interaction possibilities, including their becoming a valued, unofficial crew member, one you don't have to brief every flight. →

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