

# Hazards of Winter Operations



*By Bob Haag*

The insurance industry finds that winter conditions create a challenging time of the year. With the additional weather hazards of wind, sleet and snow, insurance claims have a tendency to increase due to takeoff and landing accidents. Although a slick runway and gusty winds may present an additional challenge, certain precautions and proper techniques will make CPA members winter flying a safer experience.

We ask that CPA members consider the following safety tips:

\*A safe cautious taxi is the first step in making a safe takeoff. Although most CFI's teach pilots to put the airplane's nose wheel on the taxiway center line, winter conditions may require that the pilot make an exception. If the taxiway is not cleared of snowdrifts that could catch a wing, the center could be abandoned for cleared pavement.

\*When the taxiway is slippery or wet, the taxi speed should be reduced to a safe level. Precautions should be taken to avoid jet prop blast that would blow the aircraft off of the runway or taxiway. Also, the pilot must watch for snow ridges and unplowed areas to avoid snagging a wheel and being pulled off the taxiway.

\*To avoid an inadvertent slide during a run up, the aircraft's wheels should be firmly placed on dry pavement.

\*It is well known that slush and snow increase rolling distance due to the additional resistance. Therefore, the advantage of the low density altitude and cold temperature's improvement in the takeoff and landing performance can be negated by the winter conditions on the runway. It has been shown that a soft field takeoff will remedy this situation by reducing the ground roll.

\*During cold weather operations it is good to consider power on approaches to landing to avoid sudden power changes that might shock the engine or present momentary hesitation. It is recommended that in gusty conditions a few knots should be added to your approach speed to provide some extra protection should wind shear be encountered.

• When landing in winter conditions the touchdown spot should be selected based on the runway conditions, It may be required that you land off the centerline to obtain better runway conditions. If you are required to land on icy pavement, it should be remembered that heavy braking on patchy snow or ice can cause a wheel to lock and a tire to blow out.

• A slippery runway can make crosswind landings difficult because of the lack of wheel friction. Check your pilot's handbook for the maximum crosswind capability when landing on a slippery runway. A better choice may be to find another airport with better wind or runway conditions.

It has been shown that winter takeoffs and landings do not necessarily present unusual hazards for a skilled pilot. Although takeoff and landing accidents are covered under the in-flight hull coverage of the policy, the best insurance is a proficient pilot exercising good judgment, hopefully, with some advanced planning, none of the CPA members will become a winter flying statistic.

*Falcon Insurance Agency, Inc. of Kerrville, Texas manages the CPA Aviation Insurance Program. For expedited quotes, coverage and service call Bob at 800-880-2727 or send him a fax at 830-792-114. Visit their web site at [www.falconinsurance.com](http://www.falconinsurance.com)*