

PARTNER'S PERSPECTIVE

» *A View from the Right Seat*



LAURIE EINSTEIN KOSZUTA has been a freelance writer for many years and along with her husband, John, now owns a Cirrus SR22. With John as the pilot-in-command and Laurie as the partner, they regularly travel to see family, visit friends and enjoy our beautiful country. You can read more of Laurie's work on her website: www.laurieeinsteinkoszuta.com.



Go-Arounds and Missed Approaches: A Pilot's (and Passenger's) Safety Net

by Laurie Einstein Koszuta



CREDIT: MEGAN VANDE VOORT


We were 10 minutes out from landing at a non-towered municipal airport.

The skies were clear with good visibility, and I could easily see the runway from my passenger window. As my husband, John, skillfully maneuvered the plane toward the runway, the trees became more distinctive and the ground rose toward us. As an anxious flyer, I have

found landings to be a nerve-wracking part of flight, so I developed my own landing technique to help me stay calm during the approach. I silently hold my breath, slowly count to 10, and exhale only when I can feel and hear the wheels tap as they touch the ground. So while flying that day, I knew that touchdown was imminent but then suddenly the

engine roared, the nose tilted up and the plane began to climb. We weren't landing at all. Trying not to freak out, I grabbed the small blanket covering my legs and twisted it into a ball while my knuckles turned white. What was happening? What was wrong with the airplane? So many scenarios went through my head.

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A missed approach is executed when an IFR pilot breaks out from the clouds or during fog and doesn't see the distinguished characteristics of the runway to land.

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the fact to explain the missed approach to passengers because of the significant focus and attention they require. If the weather conditions are unfavorable, air traffic control will divert the plane to another airport. Even on commercial flights, these procedures can make passengers anxious and worried and in need of reassurance that everything is normal and operating smoothly.

"Pilots tend to be Type A personalities," Arch said, "and generally believe they can execute every landing, however they need to change their thought processes and plan for go-arounds and missed approaches. They should always prioritize safety over pushing for a potentially unsafe landing. The actual touchdown is only a tiny part of the landing procedure. The major work is getting the aircraft into the proper position and configuration for a safe touchdown."

What can pilots do to help their partners and passengers feel less anxious, particularly if they are inexperienced fliers?

"Every pilot," said Arch, "should always brief their passengers that a go-around

or missed approach procedure might be necessary based on the day's conditions. It could be a brief statement before take-off, such as on the car ride to the airport or after everyone has climbed into the plane. It is important to communicate that safety is the top priority. If necessary, the pilot may decide to go around and try again when it's safer, or even divert to another airport if the conditions dictate. It's important to explain that this is a standard procedure and not something to worry about."

According to Arch, the briefing should inform passengers that if the pilot executes a missed approach or go-around, they should expect the throttle to come up and the plane will start climbing. The best thing partners and passengers can do is stay silent during this time, as it requires intense concentration by the pilot.

"I'm not saying it's scary," Arch said. "As an instructor when I train students for emergencies, I always ask, what if you had family or kids in the plane screaming the whole time wanting to know what is happening? How would you handle that?

It can be very distracting, particularly if the weather is bad."

Arch likened the experience to driving at high speed on a highway when you suddenly realize you need to exit but are in the wrong lane and can't safely move over because a truck is blocking your path. In this scenario, you know you must miss the exit and stay in your lane to avoid an accident. At the next opportunity, you take the next exit and find your way back to your intended destination. Imagine how difficult it would be to focus if everyone in the car kept talking and asking questions during this time.

Passengers typically base their perception of a flight on how smooth the takeoffs and landings are. During the landing phase, pilots rely on visual and ground references to ensure a safe and coordinated approach. If the weather conditions are unfavorable, the pilot may not be able to land the plane on the first try. In such cases, a go-around or missed approach is not a failure but a sign of professionalism and good judgment. Knowing this can help partners and passengers feel less anxious and worried. ⊕