



The WAA Newsletter

Cockpit Corner

What's In Your Survival Bag?

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What's in your survival bag?

You took off from HPN over an hour ago on your way to KPWM for a nice lobster lunch. The sky is a high overcast layer with 30 miles visibility and you are enjoying a 27 knot tailwind at 7500ft. The autopilot is on, the ride is smooth and life is good. You just checked in with Boston center when you hear a momentary hiccup in the engine. You can feel your heart beating quicker in your chest as you've never heard the engine make a noise like that before. Maybe it was nothing. You stare at the engine tachometer for what seems like 10 minutes anticipating the same hiccup to appear. It doesn't. All is good again so you start to relax a little. You get the hand-off to the next controller and the minute you check in the engine starts surging uncontrollably followed by violent

vibrations throughout the whole airplane. Before you can bring the power back to try to settle the engine you hear two loud bangs proceeded by an eerie silence. The engine is dead.

Does the thought of having an engine failure in flight and then having to glide to a field seem like a remote chance to you? We should constantly train for engine failures (and other emergencies), but have you given any thought about what happens after you put the aircraft down on the ground? What supplies and equipment will you need if you are ditching an aircraft in a remote area with harsh weather or unforgiving terrain? Throughout the years of my GA flying I have put together a collection of survival items that I take along with me on every flight. In this issue of Cockpit Corner we ask the question: what's in your survival bag?

The main item of any survival bag is a first aid kit. There are many good, compact first aid kits available on the market. Most outdoor sporting goods stores will have some decent choices for a hiking and/or camping first aid kit that contains a wide variety of useful items appropriate in many scenarios. The kit that I have in my survival pack is made by Adventure Medical Kits. I like this pouch because of its compact size and the fact that it in addition to first aid items it also includes some basic survival and gear repair tools.

In addition to the combo first aid/survival kit, I also carry some extra survival items that I've picked up here and there throughout the years. These items include: waterproof camping matches, signal mirror, whistle, miniature compass, fishing line with hooks, multipurpose cord, space blanket, and a brightly colored rain poncho for high visibility. Again, many of these items can be found in a camping or outdoor sports store and it all fits nicely into a small plastic container that I found at a local hardware store. I also pack a 5-inch blade survival knife and a Gerber multi-tool that contains a couple of different blades and pliers. After reading an article written by a pilot who flew an airplane around the world, I always keep a jar of peanut butter and two water bottles



Adventure Medical & Survival Kit

stashed in my kit to relieve the burden of finding food for a few days.

Next on my list is a personal locator beacon commonly called a PLB. There exists the philosophy of trying to stay close to the wreckage of an airplane as long as possible due to the onboard ELT signal that should be already transmitting out and the higher visibility for search and rescue efforts. I think an extra PLB is important to have in case the airplane's ELT doesn't work or if you have to leave the aircraft to try to find food, shelter or safety. Also, if you ditch in the water and the airplane sinks, your signal will only penetrate through the water down to a shallow depth. I happen to have two PLBs which have different functions. I have the SPOT GEN₃ and a ResQLink+ PLB. Extend the antenna on the ResQLink+ and press one button to send out a 406 MHz, 121.5 MHz and GPS distress signal. I like this unit for its simplicity and the fact that it has a built-in strobe light as well. The internal battery is good for 5 years and the unit retails for about \$239.99. The SPOT GEN₃ is a PLB with the added functionality of active GPS tracking. The additional GPS feature offers various options to track your location as you travel and the ability to regularly send out your coordinates to up to ten email addresses. I thought I would use this feature but now my ForeFlight app tracks my flying automatically. The cost of my SPOT GEN₃ was \$99 plus a yearly fee, which may vary based on the company's current promotions.



SPOT GEN₃ and ResQLink+ PLBs

Two other things that I always have in my flight bag are a hand-held aviation transceiver and a powerful LED flashlight. These are fairly common flight bag items that can be useful in getting rescued after a forced landing. Having the transceiver for a lost comm scenario has justified the purchase price for me and the thought of being able to use it for other emergencies gives me another level of comfort while flying. My unit is an older Sporty's SP-400 model which works on 8 AA batteries. I do like this unit but if I

were to purchase one today I would go for a Yaezu model that utilizes a lithium battery. I've heard great things about that brand and was impressed by their various models when I saw them up close at Oshkosh two years ago.

If you have your own airplane then you should consider keeping a dedicated backpack or duffel bag with even more contingency items stored in the baggage compartment. A warm jacket, sweater, gloves, and hat are examples of items that could go a long way in a tight situation.

Hopefully this article gets you thinking about the different situations you could end up in and how to better be prepared. Even though learning and practicing engine out procedures was part of our primary training years ago, it is something we should always be keeping in the back of our minds during each flight, especially if you fly a single-engine airplane. As an example, a pre-take off brief of what to do if your engine fails during take off could mean the difference between a good outcome and a bad one. The same goes for the practice of constantly scanning for potential off-airport landing options if the engine should quit in cruise flight. Keep practicing those simulated engine failures to a spot landing in the pattern. You will need these skills when the spot you are landing on is not a paved runway. Stay diligent in your training to prepare for or prevent an emergency, but be prepared with a survival kit, should you have to make an emergency landing.

Fly safe!