

# GA1337

*Posted on 28.02.2023 by Steve Forward*

**Category:** [General Aviation](#)

**Report Title** Know your limits

## Initial Report

I consider myself to be a sensible and low risk-taking pilot. I have always trained and had no real rush to the finish line. I have been learning to fly with the ambition of flying my ex-military aircraft. Over the 4 years of the aircraft's restoration I learned to fly (PPL), did a night rating, IRR and built up my hours on PA28's and others. There was no rush. The military aircraft was completed and over the course of 2018/2019 I qualified to fly it. During this instruction I met fantastic pilots, all ex-RAF guys and/or RAF instructors and their training was and still is, world class.

I solo flew the aircraft with 2 others down to a weekend meeting where I mixed with incredible pilots of unattainable standards. On the Sunday the weather was bad but 3 aircraft had to fly back to home base some 150 miles north, mine included. We agreed there was an hour-long window around 11am and so we all set off with the 2 other aircraft in formation and me behind them solo navigating. The journey was the hardest flight I have ever undertaken. The weather was raining with low clouds and bad visibility all the way – there was a front coming down that I had to pick through. It is important to note here that ex-military aircraft are 'Permit to fly' aircraft and can only fly VMC otherwise I would have climbed above the weather. Eventually the weather cleared, and I landed at home base about 15mins after the other 2 aircraft. At no time during the flight was there any danger, and my training had kept me calm and focused. I was elated. After a debrief I got ready to fly my SEP back to its home base but the weather had closed in and the visibility was low with a cloud height of 300ft. I waited.

Eventually the visibility got slightly better and the cloud height raised a little. This is where it all went wrong. I decided to depart and started to taxi to the hold. I missed a turning on the taxiway and had to turn around. I got to the hold and the tower asked if I was sure that conditions were safe. I waited, rang my home airfield, who confirmed the bad weather was local to me, waited a few more minutes then lined up. There was a strong crosswind from the left and the clouds were around 400ft. I sat there for a few seconds then applied full power; 10secs later I was stopped on the grass to the left of the runway having slewed to the left at 40 knots or so and gone straight off the runway. I was not hurt nor the plane damaged, but this inevitability shut the airfield for 2 hours while I was recovered. I got a taxi home.

So, what happened? After many hours and sleepless nights, I have come to these conclusions:

- I was extremely tired after the taxing flight. I was on a high and didn't realise this.
- Being around pilots way beyond my ability made me over-confident.
- I ignored my own limits. The weather for the home flight was way too bad for my experience level. I had 'get home-itis'.
- There were obvious signs that I ignored during the Taxi. I missed a turn! Why? The Tower we're concerned! I should have turned back to the Apron.
- The conditions were poor. I should never have approached the aircraft.

I consider myself to be reasonably intelligent person, aware of these issues, and yet I ended up where I did. Thankfully no one was harmed but it could have been so much worse. My advice is to never breach your own self-set limits. You set them when you are thinking straight, so trust them.

## Comment

Thank you to another reporter for their candid report revealing an incident that was not their finest hour. It is only through such altruistic contributions that we can learn lessons to the benefit of us all. Personal performance is one of the hardest things to assess because we all tend to over-estimate our abilities when faced with situations that might be marginal, especially if we have been involved in other demanding activities beforehand (known as 'risky-shift' in some circles). Press-on-itis is a classic example of convincing ourselves that things aren't quite as bad as they seem and that 'it'll be alright on the night' when a dispassionate and analytical decision-making process would instead suggest otherwise. This is especially important when there isn't a credible alternative 'Plan B' (other than not to fly in this case) and so the pressure to achieve the desired outcome and accept risks that we ought not to can be quite compelling. If we think of the IAMSAFE mnemonic, then the first 'A' stands for 'Attitude' (am I emotionally ready) and the 'S' stands for 'Stress' (am I under pressure); an honest answer to both of these questions would perhaps have caused the reporter in this case to have thought again. As the reporter says, if there are clear signs that things aren't going well and that others are raising concerns then it's time to have a long hard think about what you are planning to do and whether it's a risk worth taking.

**I** – Illness (do I have any symptoms that might affect my ability to fly?)

**A** – Attitude (am I emotionally ready and fully focussed on the flight?)

**M** – Medication (am I taking any prescription or over-the-counter drugs that might affect my performance?)

**S** – Stress (am I under pressure or have any worries and anxieties?)

**A** – Alcohol (have I been drinking within the last 24 hours?)<sup>1</sup>

**F** – Fatigue (am I tired or not adequately rested?)

**E** – Eating (am I adequately nourished?)

## Key Issues

### Dirty Dozen Human Factors

The following 'Dirty Dozen' Human Factors elements were a key part of the CHIRP discussions about this report and are intended to provide food for thought when considering aspects that might be pertinent in similar circumstances.

**Stress** – over stimulation from the previous flight

**Fatigue** – tiredness after previous demanding flight

**Pressure** – desire to get to home airfield

**Awareness** – crosswind threat not fully assimilated; other errors ignored

**Complacency** – overconfidence in ability to deal with crosswind

**stress**Stress

**fatigue**Fatigue

**pressure**Pressure

**loss\_of\_awareness**Awareness

**complacency**Complacency



