



# Fuel Monitoring

## Don't Be "Fuel-ish"

According to the Joseph T. Nall report (produced by AOPA's Air Safety Institute), 89 accidents occurred in 2010 as a result of fuel exhaustion; 11 of them fatal. And despite a decline in fuel management accidents through 2008, more recently those numbers have been reversing, accounting for eight percent of all accidents in 2010. According to the Nall report, inadequate flight planning — failure to determine the amount of fuel required for the flight or the amount actually on board, or to verify the rate of fuel consumption en route — accounted for the largest share (48 percent).

Another interesting Nall Report stat showed that a quarter of fuel-management accidents took place at night; almost three times the number seen in other accident categories and a sure sign of "get-home-it is." Fuel management accidents often boil down to a lack of planning and/or poor decision making. Common examples include not accounting for a stronger-than-expected en route headwind, trying to squeeze out that extra bit of mileage to get to an airport with cheaper fuel prices, or perhaps trying to save face with passengers eager to get home.

One of the more head-scratching aspects of fuel management accidents is simply how easy they are to prevent, as well as recognize well before they happen. Blaming a bad fuel gauge doesn't cut it. To help prevent getting into this situation, here are some tips:

- Check your fuel before you go. It seems simple, but you'd be surprised how many pilots skip this important step during preflight.
- Budget extra time for an extra fuel stop or to make an unexpected landing. A good rule of thumb is to try and land with no less than an hour of fuel left.

- Make use of any available fuel monitoring technology, but also know your burn rate. Add a gallon or two to that rate for good measure. This is especially pertinent if you are flying an unfamiliar aircraft.
- If you do get low on fuel, don't be afraid to declare an emergency. Too often, pilots fear paperwork or the embarrassment of admitting an error instead of getting ATC's full attention to help get to a fuel pump as quickly as possible.

*Following these simple steps is a sure-fire way to prevent you from getting caught "fueling around."*

*For more information:*

**AOPA's Fuel Awareness Safety Advisor**

<http://bit.ly/19zQ6xf> (PDF Download)

