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Pre-Flight Checklists

In the past few months I have personally witnessed two easily preventable model airplane crashes. In each case, the model airplane became uncontrollable immediately after takeoff, and crashed with predictable results. In the first instance, the pilot neglected to connect the aileron servos when he assembled his airplane, and in the second case, the pilot inadvertently selected the wrong model on his computer radio. While the loss of these models is regrettable, an important lesson can be learned from their demise. As our models get larger, heavier and more powerful, the damage they are capable of inflicting likewise increases, and so as modelers be must always be vigilant to do everything possible to operate our models safely. In the full scale aviation world, pilots use checklists for all phases of flight as an aid to remembering critical tasks. The human memory is notoriously unreliable, particularly in stressful situations, so checklists are used to compliment the pilots training to ensure that nothing critical is overlooked. As modelers, I think we can learn a great deal from this practice, and for a very small amount of effort, greatly increase the level of safety in our flying. A number of sample checklists are offered below:

Assembly Checklist

1. Inspect model for any external damage
2. Verify battery, receiver and servos are securely mounted
3. Verify all linkages are tight and secure.
4. Verify engine and muffler are tight and secure.
5. Verify aileron and flap connections are made and secure.
6. Verify wing is properly attached (bolts tight, sufficient rubber bands).
7. Perform range check of radio system.
8. Verify correct direction of ALL controls (right is right, up is up, etc.).

Preflight Checklist

1. Verify frequency is not in use, and put Frequency Pin on Pinpole.
2. Verify that model is restrained, and area is clear for starting.
3. Verify that transmitter antenna is full extended.
4. Verify correct direction of ALL controls (right is right, up is up, etc.) during taxi.
5. Verify all trim controls, rate switches, etc. are in correct position.
6. Announce intentions prior to taking off.