



Let's all go!

Considerations when flying with the family **BY IAN J. TWOMBLY**

If flying is the second greatest thrill known to man (landing being the first), then flying with a loving spouse and the kids must be number three. Using an airplane for its designed purpose—to get from point A to point B—with the entire family is a joy that ground-pounders can't comprehend and aren't lucky enough to experience. But before you blast off to grandmother's house, take some time to consider the ways in which flying with many vastly differs from flying by yourself.

Take a moment to remember what car trips were like when you were young and single, or even young and married, and what they became when junior arrived, and you'll start to understand how different flying with the

family will be. There are safety considerations, hearing protection issues, ear and sinus precautions to be taken—and, of course, there will be no more of the "I'll-pull-this-car-over-right-now" routine.

Just as the airlines require an FAA-approved car seat, so too must you have one in your airplane. This is according to FAR 91.107. The regulation says the seat must have a sticker indicating it is safe for use in both cars and airplanes. But not to worry because most seats manufactured today meet the standard. Interestingly, the FAA prohibited the use of booster seats on airliners years ago, finding that the occupant of the seat behind the child in the booster seat would exert too much force on the seatback, causing a very unsafe condition for the child. Keep in mind that most booster seats which use the automobile seat belts to secure the child do not provide sufficient restraint without an accompanying shoulder belt—which could be an issue if your airplane doesn't have them.

Where's the safest place to put the seat? No one has researched the question, but common sense should prevail. If you put your infant in a rear-facing car seat in the back of the car, do the same in the airplane. And, although airplanes without airbags would seem to indicate a child seat could go in the front, consider that many backseat passengers survive accidents where the pilot doesn't. Besides, a young passenger could distract the pilot—and those little feet and hands can reach farther than you might think.

If you absolutely have to leave the car seat at home, a good alternative is a harness device called **CARES** (www.kidsflysafe.com). CARES is a restraint that loops over the seatback at the top and through the lap belt on the bottom. Then a buckle in the middle completes a system that resembles just the restraint portion of a standard car seat.