

Since the purpose of TD 101 is to learn more about TD flying, there are a number of steps I take even a few days before I plan to go out to the field. Along with charging and checking batteries and equipment, I'll start by visiting a website that I find very useful:

<http://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?lat=38.52910&lon=-121.69418&unit=0&lg=english&FcstType=graphical>

A few days before an event and usually the night and morning before, I will check the forecasts. My favorite website for checking weather is the NOAA National Weather Service Forecast Office. They provide a 6-day forecast that includes projections for temperatures, wind speeds and directions, cloud cover, precipitation potential and amount. I have found this data to be pretty accurate, though weather systems may come in a few hours earlier or later than projected.

At contests, you fly the conditions that are there, but knowing that winds will pick up in the afternoon may encourage you to finish your rounds as early as possible. Planes like Radians top out at about 8mph, so if the winds exceed that speed, you will find your plane is slowly losing headway. When flying in the wind, learning to ride 'the wave' can be crucial. That skill takes a while to learn, and our line of trees is a great place to practice. Winds and trees also bring rotors, so when leaving the tree line, I try to avoid the downwind side and when you make the decision to leave the trees, move away quickly.

Another way that I prepare for flying is by starting my day with sunscreen before I leave the house, and to begin hydrating while I drive out to the field. I have found that if I wait to the field to apply sunscreen, I may get sidetracked and forget. Best to simply make this part of your packing up like putting your transmitter in the car. Staying hydrated is increasingly important as the weather warms, and if you don't start early, you can find yourself in trouble in the afternoon.

If you don't already know, for about 3 weeks between May and June we'll get no-see-ums. This is actually a variety of small gnats that seem to like areas like under hat bands and beneath your belt. They breed where there is standing water, and our flying field is next to a large area of wetlands. Fortunately, after a few weeks of warm temperatures, they disappear. It is a good idea to look for some repellent with DEET, and if you get bitten I have found that skeeter sticks work pretty well to calm the itch.

And finally, you should prepare a kit of items you may need. I carry extra tape, a spare bind plug for the receiver. Some scissors and parts for my plane such as extra wing bolts and spare wing joiners. Having a spare servo may come in handy and some CA as well. My servo wires can fall down into the wing tips, so I always carry a wire with a hook at the end. Having what you need to do quick field repairs can make the difference between a somber drive home and a great day at the field, so having spares that keep you in the air is invaluable.

—Aric

Note: In the SVSS archives is a great article about thermals in the newsletter section
March 92 newsletter- Understanding Thermals by Mike Reagan
August 92 newsletter- Flying in thermals by Neal Nolte