TAKE FIVE...

for safety
Five minutes reading could save a life

Formation Flight

The risk

As pilots, we are in the business of managing and mitigating risks. Formation flying adds a new set of hazards to a flight by taking the decision-making ability away from the individual pilot and putting it in the hands of the lead aircraft. The lead aircraft, in turn, has to navigate, communicate, and think for the group, all while having to operate the aircraft with consideration to others in the formation. Military pilots and precision aerobatic teams mitigate this risk though specialized training, years of experience, and strict standard operating procedures (SOP).

How will you reduce the risks associated with formation flight?

The regulations

There are two *Canadian Aviation Regulations* (CARs) that apply to formation flight other than at an air show:

602.21 No person shall operate an aircraft in such proximity to another aircraft as to create a risk of collision.

602.24 No person shall operate an aircraft in formation with other aircraft except by pre-arrangement between

(a) the pilots-in-command of the aircraft; or

(b) where the flight is conducted within a control zone, the pilots-in-command and the appropriate air traffic control unit.

Pre-flight briefings should be considered an essential part of the requirement to pre-arrange a formation flight.

Before the flight, ask yourself a few questions…

- **Did the briefing cover how the flight is to be conducted in both normal and emergency situations?**
- **What is your role in the event of an emergency?**
- **Are your formation skills good enough that you won't pose a risk of collision? How do you know?**
- **Is the pilot on your wing good enough? How do you know?**

If you have trouble answering these questions consider postponing the flight until you can.

Other factors and information:
- Check with your insurance provider, not all insurance companies cover formation flight.
- The *Aeronautical Information Manual* (TC AIM) RAC 12.13 describes formation flight procedures with reference to air traffic control and flight planning.

Canada