

WILLIAMSPORT SUN-GAZETTE

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Monday, April 20, 2015

Flying, driving, being alert on the mind of local man

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Each Monday, the Sun-Gazette asks somebody in the area, "What's on your mind?" If you have a topic you would like to share, contact us at news@sungazette.com.)

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Being a pilot doesn't make you cool, but if you're cool, you're probably a pilot. At least, that's what Keith McAndrew's shirt said when he was asked what was on his mind.

"I've had my pilot's license for five years and the No. 1 rule in flying is don't give up flying the airplane," the 58-year-old Williamsport resident said.

Though it may sound like common sense, the advice is sound.

When flying a plane, there are distractions such as the radio or possible problems that need to be diagnosed or fixed while in the air, but the first priority should be to fly the plane no matter what else is going on.

"Aviate, navigate, communicate and don't drop the

airplane to fly the radio," McAndrew said. The same lesson applies to driving, and McAndrew would know since he's been driving trucks for a living for 30 years.

"When behind the wheel, the first priority is to drive the vehicle. Other drivers are counting on it," he said.

Staying focused on driving and avoiding distractions has been the focal point of anti-texting-while-driving campaigns throughout the country that are sponsored by trauma centers and cellphone providers alike.

"If a driver is focusing more on distractions than on driving, then it can land them in big trouble," McAndrew said. "Everybody else has to guess what they are doing if they don't signal or make sudden, unexpected moves."

Letting distractions interfere while driving is especially dangerous during periods of high workload, such as city

driving or searching for an address, according to McAndrew.

"The second rule is to not get behind the airplane. Always be thinking ahead," he said.

Like a game of chess, proficient players, or pilots, need to think of not only the next move but many moves ahead.

"Know where you are going, and how you are going to get there," McAndrew said. "Plan your route before you even leave."

That same rule once again can be applied to driving. Don't get behind the car.

"If a driver is distracted and in the wrong lane, it is best to take the next exit and work your way back. Then be more attentive next time," he said. "Don't cut across three lanes, endangering other drivers because you didn't think ahead."

Though he is a crusader for safety today, McAndrew used to be a

skydiving instructor, logging about 1,100 jumps.

Since take-off and landing are the most dangerous parts of any flight, McAndrew said he only was ever in the plane for half the danger — so it wasn't too much of a risk.

These days he enjoys taking his friends and family up in his plane as often as possible.



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