

# A new approach to approaches

By Kevin Psutka, COPA president and CEO

I am a current instrument rated pilot and had the fortunate opportunity to participate in and learn from the development of the revised format Canada Air Pilot approach procedure layout and content (see story and links to briefing materials <http://www.multibriefs.com/briefs/COPA/eFlightMajorChanges.pdf> ).

I hope that instrument rated pilots are investing some time in becoming familiar with the new format that is now rolling out across Canada, but I would like to emphasize the need to practice and use the Constant Descent Final Approach (CDFA) method for conducting non-precision approaches, especially if you have an IFR test flight or renewal coming up in the near future.

A comment in an email from a pilot examiner caught my attention when he referred to the recently revised Flight Test Guide <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/civilaviation/publications/tp9939-menu-965.htm> and stated that “The new Guide states that flying a Step-down approach when the CDFA could be flown will be considered a major error.” Although I agree that CDFAs are the way to go, for all of the reasons that are given in the briefing materials, there are circumstances, such as in icing conditions or conducting circling only approaches when the old “drive and drive” step down approaches may be the best way to go. But how are examiners going to treat these considerations on a flight test?

To gain some insight, I contacted Arlo Speer, Chief, Commercial Flight Standards at Transport Canada. I should note that the flight test standard regarding CDFAs applies to both private and commercial pilots.

The pertinent words from the Flight Test Guide are:

“Unless a CDFA profile is not practical to expedite descent out of icing conditions or for an approach that requires circling to land, pilots should use the CDFA technique whenever possible as it adds to the safety of the approach by reducing pilot workload and reducing the possibility of error in flying the approach.”

“The use of step-down approach techniques where CDFA profiles are possible and practical will be considered a major error.”

Arlo clarified what is expected on a flight test and in everyday IFR operations:

“What IS expected during an Instrument Rating flight test is that candidates flying non-precision approaches will demonstrate the ability to correctly apply a constant descent final approach profile, providing it is possible and practical to do so during the flight test.”

“Other than during an instrument rating flight test, pilots are NOT required to use a constant descent final approach procedure for any approach that they fly; however, we do acknowledge that a constant descent final approach procedure can offer benefits for many of those approaches, so it is important that pilots have the necessary skills to apply those procedures in a safe and efficient manner.”

“Requiring a demonstration of proficiency in flying precision approaches during a flight test in no way obligates instrument rated pilots to fly only precision approaches afterwards. Similarly, the requirement to demonstrate proficiency in using a constant descent final approach profile to fly non-precision approaches does not obligate instrument rated pilots to fly all non-precision approaches using only that method.”

So, study the briefing materials and the new format depictions and then get out there and practice. CDFAs are not only a new approach to approaches, they are a required flight test item when it is possible and practical to do so.