

EXITING YOUR AIRCRAFT QUICKLY AND SUCCESSFULLY

At the Duxford air show in Great Britain earlier this month, a Douglas Skyraider collided with a P-51 Mustang. Video may be seen at, <http://vimeo.com/26291756> . The P-51 was destroyed, but fortunately, all involved walked away from what could have been a very serious accident. You can see in the video the pilot of the Mustang, Rob Davie, ditch the plane at approximately 500 feet and successfully deploy his parachute.

This accident reminds us of the need to practice bailing out of aircraft. In this incident, the pilot had little time to react, but made all of the right decisions when he realized that the aircraft was not recoverable. There is never a time to practice actually ditching an airplane; but it is quite easy to sit in your cockpit on the ground and rehearse what you will do if you ever have to make the decision to bail out. While sitting in your aircraft, practice the entire routine that you will need to execute from the start of an emergency, from ejecting the canopy and releasing your harness to getting up out of your seat and exiting the aircraft. What specific circumstances would cause you to bail out? In which specific order would you take the necessary steps to get out of the aircraft? If and when the time comes to execute this procedure, it's critical that it be second nature to you. This kind of practice session can easily be conducted in the safety of your hangar and could become the difference between life and death.