Some Hot Topics about a Cold Time

Now that the Melrose winter (defined as "a warm dry winter" that somehow manages routine hard freezes) is upon us, here are a couple of thoughts to ponder:

- **Almost nobody here flys a lot and most people shun the skies when the weather is not good.**
    - **Therefore, it absolutely imperative that you keep up with winter maintenance issues, which include:**
        - **Fuel System – this area is moist and you all have water in your fuel tanks. You must drain off the water from your low-point drains before every flight. Ice is insidious and can cause "a little" power loss or "a lot."**
            - **A corollary to this is those of you who have "carb air heat" or "alternate air" doors should make sure you select a warm source of air before any sustained glide – like at landing. If you select a warm air source, you must return to full air flow when full power is required. One technique is to select direct air flow just prior to touchdown when you do your final checklist. That way you can respond immediately should you need to make a go-round (like Bambi chooses that instant to stroll on the numbers).**
        - **Air Pressures – as the air temperature goes down, so does the air pressure in your tires and accumulators (something about Boyle's law). Check your tire pressures before each flight to make sure you still have what you need. Other systems (struts, etc.) should also be examined. Not a bad plan to look at your car either. A rough gage is to estimate a 1 psi drop for every 3.5 to 6 degrees (moisture content of the air is the variable here).**
        - **Those of you who fly IFR need to ensure full integrity of your pitot heat and other ice related systems.**
        - **Hangar maintenance – Most folks have flammable liquids in their hangars (like airplane fuel tanks and gasoline storage/paint, etc.), so don't use any heating device in the hangar that can produce an open flame or overheat a flammable item. Anybody who operates an aircraft engine in a hangar (even with the door open) should seek psychiatric counseling.**
- **It's really okay to fly when it's cold outside. Low horsepower power plants come to life and the air can be wonderfully clear and "brisk." Just be prepared.**