

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: January 14, 1975

Forwarded to:

Honorable Alexander P. Butterfield
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D. C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-74-126 thru 127

The National Transportation Safety Board is concerned about the continued use of special Visual Flight Rules (VFR) clearances and VFR weather minimums, which apply to flights outside controlled airspace.

From 1964 through 1972, 44 fatal accidents occurred which involved special VFR clearances. These accidents caused 105 deaths. "Weather" was cited as a cause in 1 of the accidents and as a factor in 38. The probable cause was undetermined in two of the accidents, because the aircraft crashed into the water and the wreckage was not recovered. There were three accidents in which "weather" was not cited as a cause or a factor. Twenty-nine of the pilots involved held private pilot certificates, 12 held commercial pilot certificates, 2 held student pilot certificates, and 1 held an airline transport pilot certificate. Ten of the pilots were instrument-rated and had an average of 6,624 flight-hours. Thirty-three of the remaining 34 pilots had an average of 1,138 flight-hours, and 11 of the 33 had less than 200 flight-hours.

During the same years, the Safety Board cited "ceiling" as a cause and a factor more frequently in fatal, general aviation accidents than any other meteorological factor, and cited "fog" as a cause and a factor second most frequently.

Under current special VFR rules, weather conditions could be below the Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) landing minimums prescribed for an airline transport pilot, yet a student pilot or a private pilot with low flight-hours and no instrument rating could be granted permission to land during daylight with a ceiling as low as 100 feet, so long as the visibility was at least 1 mile. The special VFR weather minimums do not consider such factors as terrain clearance and obstacle clearance, which are considered in IFR minimums. The special VFR weather minimums

also apply to VFR operations outside controlled airspace at 1,200 feet, or less, above the surface.

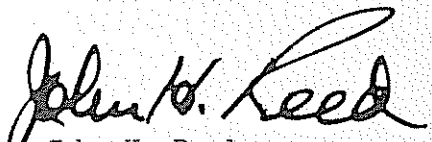
The Safety Board is firmly convinced that the special VFR rules and the VFR rules pertaining to operations outside controlled airspace do not provide an adequate margin of safety and should be changed at the earliest possible date. Accordingly, the Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

1. Abolish 14 CFR 91.107.
2. Amend 14 CFR 91.105 to require the same weather minimums outside controlled airspace as are required within controlled airspace.

(Certain operations, such as search and rescue, police patrol, firefighting, etc., could obtain waivers to any minimum rule, and recognition of this need should be provided for in any rule change.)

Members of our Bureau of Aviation Safety will be available for consultation, if you desire.

REED, Chairman, McADAMS, THAYER, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.


By: John H. Reed
Chairman

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