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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: June 30, 1980

Forwarded to:

Honorable Langhorne M. Bond
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D.C. 20591

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

A-80-51 and -52

A Safety Board review of 14 CFR 91.23 (Fuel requirements for flight in IFR conditions) and 91.83 (Flight plan; information required) has revealed a disparity with respect to the requirement that a pilot file for an alternate airport in a flight plan. The regulations state that a pilot is not required to file for an alternate airport on an instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan if the forecast weather at the intended destination airport, for a period of 1 hour before to 1 hour after the estimated landing time, indicates a ceiling of 2,000 feet above the airport and visibility of 3 miles.

The Safety Board notes there are 11 high-altitude airports in the United States which have instrument approach minimum descent altitudes (MDA's) or decision heights (DH's) higher than 2,000 feet above the airport.^{1/} Thus, if the intended destination ceiling is 2,000 feet, the current regulations do not require that pilots flying into these airports file for an alternate destination when the weather is below approach minimums. Although this situation has not contributed to an accident, the Safety Board believes that the hazard potential is sufficient to warrant corrective measures to alert pilots to the disparity in these regulations.

The Safety Board is aware that the Federal Aviation Administration is considering rulemaking action to correct this obvious disparity. The Safety Board endorses such a rule change and urges that it be expedited. Regardless of a rule change, the Board believes that action should be taken also to alert a pilot filing a flight plan for one of these destination airports to the disparity between the requirements specified in 14 CFR 91 and the existing approach minimums. Specific weather minima for alternate requirements for these airports could be specified in the Airman's Information Manual, or in the Special Notice and Bulletin section and on the approach charts published by National Ocean Survey and Jeppesen.

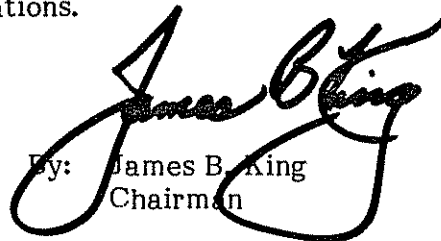
^{1/} Bishop, Calif.; South Lake Tahoe, Calif.; Ukiah, Calif.; Butte, Mont.; Helena, Mont.; Missoula, Mont.; Chadron, Nebr.; Ely, Nev.; Klamath Falls, Oreg.; Omak, Wash.; and Casper, Wyo.

Accordingly, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Aviation Administration:

Alert pilots to the disparity between the requirements of 14 CFR 91.23 and 91.83 and the approach minimums for certain high altitude airports, by publishing in the Airman Information Manual and on appropriate approved approach charts a specific requirement to file for an alternate airport for those airports where approach minimums are higher than 2,000 feet above airport elevation. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-80-51)

Amend 14 CFR 91.23 and 91.83 to require pilots to file for an alternate airport on an IFR flight plan whenever the ceiling of the destination airport is forecasted to be less than 2,000 feet above the airport or 1,000 feet above the minimum approach altitude or visibility less than 3 miles for a period of 1 hour before to 1 hour after the estimated time of arrival. (Class II, Priority Action) (A-80-52)

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS, GOLDMAN, and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in these recommendations.


By: James B. King
Chairman