

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
Federal Aviation Administration  
VFR PILOT EXAM-O-GRAM\* NO. 4

PREFLIGHT PLANNING FOR A VFR CROSS-COUNTRY FLIGHT  
(Series 1)

1. WHAT IS REQUIRED OF THE PILOT PRIOR TO THE FLIGHT? FAR, Part 91.5, states in part: "Each pilot in command shall, before beginning a flight, familiarize himself with all available information concerning that flight. This information must include, for . . . a flight not in the vicinity of an airport, weather reports and forecasts, fuel requirements, alternatives available if the planned flight cannot be completed, and any known traffic delays of which he has been advised by ATC . . . ."
2. WHY IS THIS REQUIRED? Careful preflight planning, in addition to satisfying FAR, enables the pilot to make his flight with greater confidence, ease, and safety. A review of fatal accident statistics for one year shows that as a "cause factor", inadequate flight planning was second only to "failure to maintain airspeed resulting in a stall."
3. WHAT ARE SOME SUGGESTED STEPS TO BE USED IN FLIGHT PLANNING?
  - a. Assemble materials which will be needed on the flight such as current sectional charts, and other charts, for the route to be flown; the latest Airman's Information Manual (AIM), and plotter, computer, etc. Take along charts which adjoin those for the route of flight. Thus you are prepared in case it becomes necessary to circumnavigate bad weather, or in case you inadvertently fly off the chart on which your course is drawn.
  - b. On the sectional chart, draw course to be flown; study terrain; select appropriate check points; consider alert, warning, restricted, and prohibited areas and Air Defense Identification Zones; study airport information, including enroute airports that can be used in case of emergency; choose refueling stops; list frequencies of towers and navigational aids to be used and also Flight Service Stations reporting the weather.
  - c. Review weather maps and forecasts, current weather reports, winds aloft forecasts, pilot weather reports, SIGMETS, AIRMETS, Notices to Airmen (NOTAMS), and other information. Although you can get weather information by telephone, it is strongly recommended that a personal visit be made to the nearest Weather Service Office, Flight Service Station, or other flight service facility.

A chapter on Flight Planning is contained in the FAA publication, Pilot's Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge, including a summary of flight assistance services available.

4. WHAT FURTHER ACTION IS DICTATED BY GOOD OPERATING PRACTICES? File a Flight Plan! This is not required by FAR but is dictated by good operating practice. It is extremely unlikely that air traffic rules can ever be written so as to eliminate the need for GOOD JUDGMENT in the planning and conduct of every flight. The pilot must make the final decision as to whether or not to make a flight. Use reasonable restraint in exercising this prerogative when preflight planning indicates the existence of marginal conditions of any kind.

BE SAFER -- FILE A FLIGHT PLAN

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