

Department of Transportation
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
VFR PILOT EXAM-O-GRAM* NO. 6

PREFLIGHT PLANNING FOR A VFR CROSS-COUNTRY FLIGHT (Series 3)

The statement "NO FLIGHT PLAN FILED," which appears in many accident reports and accounts of extensive search operations for missing aircraft, indicates a degree of thoughtlessness on the part of the pilot for the safety of his flight.

"Businessman-pilot flying daughter home from college crash lands in sparsely populated area resulting in injury to father and daughter. Rescue effected within three hours of ETA near flight plan course filed with FAA.

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"Family of five forced down by snow storm while on flight to winter resort. No flight plan filed with FAA and 5 days later family reported missing by relatives. Search parties after covering extensive area, find bodies with no injuries-- expiration attributed to exposure."

HOW, WHEN, AND WHERE SHOULD A VFR FLIGHT PLAN BE FILED? Pilots are urged to file in person or by telephone to the nearest FSS prior to departure. Radio should be used for filing plans only if other means are not available. When filing by telephone or radio, have all the necessary information written down in the order it appears on a flight plan so that you will utilize the least amount of the controller's time and release the telephone circuit or radio frequency for someone else.

DO FEDERAL AVIATION REGULATIONS (FAR) REQUIRE THAT FLIGHT PLANS BE FILED? Regulations do not require the filing of flight plans for VFR flights unless the flight is to penetrate an ADIZ (Air Defense Identification Zone) or for flights between Mexico and the U. S. Filing at other times is entirely at the pilot's discretion, but is recommended as good operating practice.

WHY SHOULD A FLIGHT PLAN BE FILED? A flight plan not only assures prompt search and rescue in the event you become overdue or missing, but it also permits en route stations and the destination station to render better service by having prior knowledge of your flight. It costs nothing except a few minutes of time to file a flight plan and may be the best "insurance" investment you ever made. On the other hand, failure to file could contribute to unpleasant moments during flight, or long periods of waiting for help when an emergency arises.



WHAT DISPOSITION IS MADE OF FLIGHT PLANS? When the flight plan is filed before takeoff, the FSS takes no action on it until informed of your actual departure time. The following procedures are in effect: when a VFR flight plan is filed, it will be held until one hour after the proposed departure time and then canceled unless:

1. The actual departure time is received.
2. A revised proposed departure time is received.
3. At a time of filing, the FSS is informed that the proposed departure time will be met, but actual time cannot be given because of inadequate communications.

WHAT MUST BE DONE AT THE COMPLETION OF THE FLIGHT? If a flight plan has been filed FAR requires that an arrival notice be filed at the completion of the flight or when the flight terminates at other than the planned destination. This may be done (even if no tower or FSS is located at the destination) by contacting the nearest FSS by radio prior to landing, or by telephone after landing. Contrary to popular belief, the control tower at the airport of landing does not automatically close a VFR flight plan when the landing is completed. The tower is not always aware of which aircraft were on a flight plan. It is the pilot's responsibility to file the arrival notice with the tower or FSS (simply asking by radio, telephone, or personal visit that the flight plan be closed).

* Exam-O-Grams are non-directive in nature and are issued solely as an information service to individuals interested in Airman Written Examinations.

Rev. 3/71

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