

A Tale Of Two Briefings

My friends learn lessons with difficulty. On a Saturday morning, one briefed with The Weather Channel over his morning coffee. “The (Weather Channel’s) local forecast said nothing about fog!” he later protested.

I saw the same segment—it showed a regional one-degree temperature-dew point spread. So, I filed IFR and headed out. We flew the ILS, logged an approach and had a casual, uncrowded breakfast—until the fog lifted 90 minutes later and the VFR swarm arrived. My friend missed out; by the time he left the second time and made the trip, breakfast was over. He needed only a briefing, charts and approach plates; what he got was a disappointing breakfast on a cracked plate.

We coined the phrase “Blue Skies mindset” for another pilot friend after a flight to Addison Airport, under the Dallas, Texas, Class Bravo airspace, from an airport in southeast Kansas. The weather was perfect, so he reasoned, he’d go VFR, stay below the Bravo, call up the Addison Tower and slide right in. Instead, he became caught between his business plans and the thought of that likely conversation with federal law enforcement for flying unauthorized into a TFR.

The bottom line is it’s not uncommon for pilots to become complacent about briefing for short hops, or when not crossing time zones or making major changes in latitude. Particularly tempting is seeing at a glance that perfect conditions cover the route. But this still leaves you only halfway to knowing all you need.

As good as ancillary sources may be for accurate weather information, there’s some aviation information available in a timely manner only from actual aviation sources. Weather is only part of a standard briefing. The real deal includes plenty of needed, important non-weather info.

