



Flight In Reduced Visibility

We'd all like to fly on clear sunny days, but it's just not going to happen. Instead, pilots must contend with weather phenomena acting to reduce visibilities, ceilings or both, while roughly half the time, there's no sun shining at all. Do we park the airplane and wait for better conditions? Well, yes, actually; that would be a great idea for many pilots.

For the rest of us, we need to pay special attention to flight in low-visibility conditions like IMC, certainly, but also when there's haze and smoke about, or whenever we can't reliably see the terrain and obstacles around the airplane.

An instrument rating surely helps, especially when considering the most common type of low-viz-related accident, continued VFR flight into IMC. But accidents in low-visibility conditions aren't restricted to IMC: There's night flying for one, plus VMC resulting in optical illusions.

To overcome these challenges, the NTSB recommends that pilots:

- Obtain weather briefing;
- Don't allow situation to become dangerous before acting;
- Ask for help from ATC;
- Prepare for the challenges of night flight;
- Be honest about skill limitations;
- Plan ahead with alternatives;
- Understand how to use all aircraft systems; and
- Manage distractions.

