

The Early-Cancellation Trap

You've just been cleared for the approach. As you subtly shift in the seat and re-focus on the task at hand, ATC chimes in on last time, reminding you to cancel in the air or on the ground, adding there are two airplanes trying to get in behind you and one ready to launch. The sooner you cancel IFR, the sooner the one on the ground can depart, and the ones behind you won't have to hold. The clear request is for you to cancel as soon as you spot enough of the runway environment to continue the approach and land in visual conditions. But, just as clearly, by cancelling before you're on the ground, you might be opening yourself up for an FAA enforcement action. Here's why.

Refer back to the VFR minima listed in the table on page 21. Say you spot the runway a couple of miles out on the straight-in, just as you break out of the bottom of the cloud deck at around 800 feet agl, and then cancel. You've just busted FAR 91.155. How? Well,

you're still in Class E airspace, where the minima are three miles' visibility and 500 feet below the ceiling. You're well within 500 feet from the bottom of the cloud layer, and couldn't spot the runway until you were only two miles out. And you're no longer IFR, because you just cancelled.

