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Wx Radar Clear Air Mode Explained, Oxygen Masks, TSA Pre-Cleared

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Big Blue Earth

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Thank you for taking the time to read this safety message.

Double Header: Videos of the Month are spectacular:

1. Sophia, NASA's flying telescope, aboard a 747
2. Stunning video of B767 belly landing in Warsaw, 230 aboard

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Thanks for your continued support,
Darren

Using Weather Radar - Clear Air Mode

One of the preflight actions that is among the most critical is taking a look at the weather radar. Hours before the flight, a quick look at the weather radar from the TV will suffice, but as the take off time nears, a look at the weather display at the airport is critical to me. For pilots in the South East, this is especially critical because there always seems to be convective activity. Soon after I adopted this practice, I discovered there were two modes of radar -- "Clear Air" and "Precipitation" mode. If you're a CFI, no doubt a student has asked you about this.



In explaining the difference between Clear Air Mode and Precipitation mode, we need to set the stage by discussing something called Volume Coverage Patterns. As you know, ground based weather radar has an antenna that turns in

[Sendai Japan Tsunami](#)

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RECOMMENDED READING

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[Ten Tips to Immediately Improve Your Radio Technique](#)

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[Things Your Flight Instructor Worries About](#)

[7-day Instrument Rating Training Program](#)

[IFR Checkride Reviewer](#)

[Pilot's Rules of Thumb](#)[Quote of the month](#)

"There I was, fog was so thick I couldn't see the instruments. Only way I knew I was inverted was my flying medals were in my eyes. But I knew I was really in trouble when the tower called me and told me to climb and maintain field elevation."

- Anon

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Practical advice for using the NASA form when you've violated the FARs

order to get a 360° view of the sky. The WSR-88D employs scanning strategies in which the antenna automatically raises to higher and higher preset angles, or elevation slices, as it turns. These elevation slices comprise a volume coverage pattern or VCP. It always starts a 0.5° tilt above the horizon. On the second pass, it goes to 1.5° tilt above the horizon, then 2.4, 3.4, and 4.3. Once the radar has swept through all of the preset elevation angles a "Volume Scan" is completed. A collection of preset elevation slices that the radar sweeps through is called a Volume Coverage Pattern.

[Read more at cfidarren.com](#)

Special of the Month - Pilot's Rules of Thumb - 50% off

The Ultimate Checklist

The ultimate checklist that every pilot needs. Ten years in development, this is a product that pilots of all experience levels can immediately use. This tool covers 30 normal and non-normal situations and has 9 special tools that you'll use on every flight. This high-quality plastic ruler/checklist measures approximately 3.75" x 9". Click the picture to see a larger picture.



Technical Specifications: Made of high quality 5mil plastic. Black screen print on ultra white gloss PVC for maximum readability. Underprint of signature panel white ink for Flight Plan and Power-Performance chart so you can write/erase with pencil and most pens. [\(click for larger photographic version\)](#)

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This Tool Covers:

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Industry News Feed

My Facebook page has a daily news feed which beats most other sources in the industry. To get this on your facebook wall, click the logo and "Like" what you see. You'll find news shorts, pictures, and videos. It's a quick and easy way to stay current.



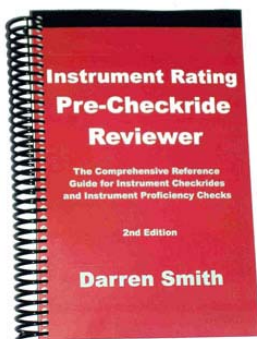
Question from several readers: "Where do you get your news feed?"



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How do you get the story first? When do the stories appear?"

Answer: I scour about 380 news sources for the story. Some days it's more, some days it's less. I've noticed that a story will break with 1 paragraph in a small town newspaper's website and then a few hours later, it's national. Those are my best sources, and when it's going to affect the general aviation pilot, it goes on my [Facebook Newsfeed](#). As for timing, sometimes it's an alert that gets sent to me and sometimes I have a free moment, so I hit one of those news sources to find the story. That happens anytime of the day or night. It has even happened when I've woken up for a glass of milk then gone back to bed. The result of this is you'll see it first on my [Facebook Newsfeed](#).

For some airline passengers, screening's a breeze...

By [Ken Kaye](#), Staff Writer, Sun-Sentinal

It's almost like the old days, when getting to the gate was a breeze. About 280,000 passengers now are allowed to cruise through checkpoints at the Miami, Dallas, Detroit and Atlanta airports. They are funneled into an express lane and usually don't have to take off shoes or belts or remove their laptops from cases.

These are the passengers who have signed up for the Transportation Security Administration's PreCheck, a program intended to make airport security more efficient. It uses basic public database information and intelligence gathering to check whether travelers are on no-fly lists or watch lists. So far, it easing congestion at American's checkpoint in Miami, aviation officials said.

"If we can confirm a person's identity and learn more about them through information they voluntarily provide, we can expedite the physical screening for many people," said TSA spokeswoman Sari Koshetz.

Fernando Harb, the director of leisure sales for the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau, took advantage of the Precheck program for the first time earlier this week - and sailed through security at Miami International Airport. "It was awesome because there was nobody in line," said Harb, an American Airlines frequent flier. "The only downfall to being part of the program is the dirty looks you get from other in people in line. I actually felt guilty."

Harb said because he flies so much, he took off his shoes by rote. "After I took my shoes off, the TSA officer said, 'you know, you don't have to that anymore,'" he said.

See more at [Sun-Sentinal](#)

FAA safety inspector admits taking 'tips' from pilots

Comment: File this under, "impossible to happen under all circumstances," this is where one bad apple (IF true) would spoil the bunch.

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Darren Smith, ATP, CFI/MEI

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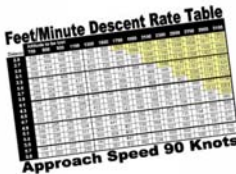
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Darren Smith, ATP, CFI/MEI

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Learning IFR Charts

FAA safety inspector admits taking 'tips' from pilots

CAMDEN - A federal aviation safety inspector from Pemberton Township admitted Thursday that he accepted tens of thousands of dollars in illegal "tips" from pilots he took out on unauthorized flights, passing them on their pilot testing and certifications.

Harrington Bishop, 63, of Red Feather Trail, pleaded guilty in federal court to an information charging him with one count of receiving illegal gratuities by a public official, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman said. Bishop faces up to two years in federal prison and fines of up to \$250,000 when U.S. District Judge Robert B. Kugler sentences him Feb. 2.

Bishop, a safety inspector with the Federal Aviation Administration, generally accepted \$300 tips when he would take pilots out on "flight checks" at the Cave Flight School at the Flying W Airport in Medford, authorities said.

See the rest of the story at [Burlington County Times](#)

Do those masks really work? Here's where they didn't

Passengers on Frontier Airlines Flight 787 were startled when the oxygen masks dropped as the airplane was cruising above the Rocky Mountains at 36,000 feet last month. But just how confused they were by an apparent shortage of oxygen masks is just becoming clear from a story reported by Rick Sallinger of the CBS television station in Denver.



As the pilots began a quick descent and a return to the airport in Denver that day, passenger Kevin McClung noticed that not everyone had oxygen masks. "All of the masks did not deploy," he told Sallinger. "There are two rows that were ahead of me that did not have masks."

Further, McClung said while his wife's mask was providing her with a stream of oxygen-dense air, his was not working at all and he thought others were having the same trouble.

Photos and a video show a man without a mask struggling with the air vent above his head. These images are being reviewed by the Federal Aviation Administration to determine if Frontier's oxygen system was defective, Sallinger said.

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Darren Smith, ATP, CFI/MEI

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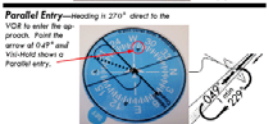
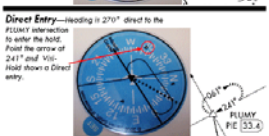


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Peter Kowalchuk, a spokesman for the airline told Sallinger there were no problems with the emergency oxygen system on the Airbus A319 saying, "If all the masks dropped, the only way that there could be unused masks or people without a mask is if there was a mask that was unused, because somebody used the wrong mask and we believe that is what happened."

[Read more at CBS4](#)

Video of the Month

Plane carrying 230 lands without wheels in Poland



Plane carrying 230 lands without wheels in Poland

NASA's flying telescope takes flight aboard a 747



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IFR Clearance Pads - Limited Supply

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