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## Newsletter - February 3rd, 2010

### FltPlan.com begins full CDM participation in the FAA's Traffic Flow Management System

Later this month, in conjunction with the FAA, FltPlan.com begins the submitting of your flight plan data to the FAA's Traffic Flow Management system up to 22 hours in advance of your scheduled flight plan's departure time (if the flight plan was selected for filing on the Active Flight Plan List).

During the past year, FltPlan.com has been working on this project with the FAA, building the secure gateway, writing the software, and performing the necessary testing to commence the sending of advanced data to the FAA on the thousands of flight plans created daily on FltPlan.com.

Starting this month, we begin an awareness program for our users on what CDM is, how CDM can benefit your flights, and how the accurate entry of your flight plan information is very important to the CDM program.

#### **What is CDM?**

CDM (Collaborative Decision Making) is a philosophy where the FAA and the aviation industry (yes, that includes you) work together for the purpose of improving air traffic management.

#### **What is a CDM Participant?**

A submitter of advanced flight plan data is known as a CDM Participant.

Once full completion has been accomplished by month's end, FltPlan.com will become the largest submitter of advanced flight plan data to the CDM program.

#### **What is the Traffic Flow Management system?**

The TFM system monitors current and projected demand (based on submitted CDM information) on the Air Traffic Control system.

### **What does this mean to the FltPlan.com users?**

By FltPlan.com submitting realistic flight data from our users to the FAA's TFM system, traffic management initiatives are greatly enhanced. This ensures that any delays (i.e. GDP/EDCT/Slots) that do occur for your flight, are based on the best information. This allows for delays to be reduced since the FAA has a better understanding of your actual flight intentions, rather than on historical data. The FAA will use your flight plan data submitted through the CDM program, (specifically: your aircraft type, estimated departure time, time en route, and expected arrival time), to manage capacity in the ATC system much more efficiently.

### **How is the CDM Data used?**

Combined with other data (airline schedules, weather, ATC constraints, etc.), your flight plan data will be used for the planning of GDP (Ground Delay Programs), release times (EDCT), miles-in-trail, and possible departure/arrival re-routes to/from the busiest airports. Outside busy terminal areas, your data will be used for enroute congestion monitoring, and possible advanced re-routing.

### **Collaborative includes you!**

The data we will be sending to the FAA will only be as good as the data that you provide FltPlan.com.  
Some simple rules to start with:

- 1.) If you know you are going, select your flight plan for filing as soon as possible.  
This will be your signal for FltPlan.com to send your flight plan data to the FAA.  
As noted above, we will send the data to the FAA 22 hours in advance of your scheduled departure time.
- 2.) If you cancel your flight, un-select the flight plan for filing. We'll take care of the rest.

Look for more tips in the coming weeks to make FltPlan.com's participation in the CDM program a success for all involved.

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## **New Video Tutorial about our eAPIS program**

Paul Tocknell at [www.askacfi.com](http://www.askacfi.com) has created a video tutorial to show you exactly how easy our eAPIS program is to use.


Paul walks you step-by-step through how to create and submit your eAPIS manifest with FltPlan.com. He uses plain language to demonstrate our already user-friendly system.

Whether you're considering our eAPIS service or you're already a subscriber, this video can show you all of our eAPIS features. Check it out at [www.askacfi.com](http://www.askacfi.com).

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## Email your Weather Briefings

It is always a pleasure to meet face-to-face with our users (most recently at the NBAA Scheduler & Dispatchers Convention in San Antonio). Often, when chatting with a long-time user, we'll be surprised to find they don't know about some of our more convenient features. In this newsletter, we'd like to re-introduce a very popular feature, that some pilots don't know is available.

On the bottom of every Weather page (except in the Multi-Printout section) is an email icon  [Email this page](#) that you can select for sending the Weather Briefing to an email address.

Why would you want to do this?

- a.) When a printer is not available with your computer at a hotel/FBO, you can email the Weather Briefing to the front desk for them to print out.
- b.) You can email the weather briefing to your smartphone/PDA so, while in flight, you can review the Weather and Notam (and 7 day forecast, in case your passengers ask).
- c.) You can send a copy of the weather to your fellow pilot for their review the night before the trip.
- d.) Many operators require their pilots to email a copy of the weather briefing, so a permanent record of the weather received can be kept on file for the flight.

In addition to sending the Weather Briefing, you can also include several lines of comments in the email.

The FltPlan.com email system also lets you save up to 20 lines of email addresses that can be selected on or off, depending on your needs. The Weather Briefing email is a great companion to the emailing of the NavLog. (By the way, did you know you can e-mail your NavLog?)

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## Export Your Filed Flight Plans to an Excel Spreadsheet

You can now export your filed flight plan HISTORY from FltPlan.com to an Excel Spreadsheet - going back as far as the past 5 years!

You can also easily select a time period for the flight plans you would like export. (For instance, choose one month, the past few months, the past year, or a specific year.) Just select your N number and desired time period from the drop-down menus.

To get started, click on the Flight Tracking link (left side of Main Menu Page) and look for:

**Display flight plans filed by FltPlan.com from this account.**

Select N#:        Period:

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## A Pilot's Story

### A Close Encounter with Mystery Mountain

*FltPlan.com's "A Pilot's Story" is a series of real-life, real airplane stories by FltPlan users.*

Okay, I realize that title above sounds like a bad Hardy Boy's mystery, but our near-miss was mysterious indeed, yet instructive. I was in the right seat this time, a copilot helper that just happened to look over at the unwinding radar altimeter that was reading unnaturally low and was rapidly headed toward zero and sudden death. I think I spotted it around 900 feet, and I cautioned the captain with increasing urgency as I watched in disbelief as it streaked towards 500, 400, 300...

Well, it got as low as 100 feet before we blasted away, and it's time to clear the air-this was in one of our beloved Simulator Sessions. I was paired with a very senior pilot and we were "flying" in unfamiliar territory to me - although I was almost certain that there weren't any such mountains on base leg out here in the Midwest plains, but there it was. We abandoned the initial approach, and the typically taciturn and unhelpful controller/instructor calmly vectored us around to the next diabolical engine failure and single-engine go-around to another runway.

Throughout the rest of the Simulator session I wondered what was up with this darn thing and with the sadist that sat behind us at his evil, darkened keyboard. A radar altimeter failure? Had I missed a popped circuit breaker of some kind? Was there a forgotten interconnect between the radar altimeter and the fact that we'd had half a dozen engine failures in the last few minutes? Some sort of geographic anomaly I was forgetting? What was the next shoe to drop? I watched and watched but as we followed the approaches scrupulously, the equipment behaved itself.

As we fly in the real world day-to-day, I still struggle to keep the radar altimeter in my close scan; it is a no-nonsense fact machine, telling you in cold numbers the exact number feet between your aircraft and oblivion. Sure, the terrain below is a constantly moving target, but this hard number could be the first red flag to catch an otherwise disastrous miscalculation; an electronic canary in the mine.

Well, somehow we survived, the last engine was extinguished, the flaps suddenly were healed after the zero-flap landing, and we nursed our coffee through the debrief of our adventures. Only at the end did I think to ask: what was the deal with the radar altimeter that time?

The instructor gave a wry smile as he told me of a little known local topographic feature known in those regions: Mystery Mountain. Purely the



instructor's invention, placed there on a whim; something only a simulator could provide, a mountain in a minute.

At first I was a tad outraged; the sacred sim etiquette had been breached: simulators have to be "real" and we train as we fly and fly as we...well, hey, this wasn't very 'real', or fair. Then the instructor explained his reasoning.

Pilots don't hit mountains that they know are there. Almost never. They hit mountains that they don't know are there, or perhaps, more diabolically, hit mountains that they KNOW aren't there. Worse yet, they've often hit the very top of such mountains, so close to a safe escape, perhaps after a few too many seconds of disbelief and delay at a very sudden mountain that "isn't there."

In this case the instructor had challenged us to react to such a sudden mountain, even if he had "cheated" to make it; to act first and ask questions later after the equipment had told us that oblivion was waiting just a few hundred feet below, even if we "knew" that there was no mountain there.

Still smacks of cheating to me! But, I get his point, and it stuck with me. When in a foreign country, or perhaps even on a visual on an especially dark night to a comfortably familiar field, I'll be careful of all the mountains out there, and keep an 'eye' on them closely. Especially the ones that I know aren't there.

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