



## Personal Minimums and Weather Cameras

Personal environmental condition minimums have long been endorsed as effective go/no-go decision making tools. This flyer will discuss how to develop and implement personal minimums. It will also acquaint you with the FAA's Weather Camera system and how it can aid in your personal minimum based decision making process.

### Aeronautical Decision Making

Aeronautical Decision Making (ADM) is a subject that covers every task pilots perform from preflight to securing their aircraft after flight. How we go about gathering relevant information and acting appropriately on that information is critical to our success and sometimes, to our survival.

One aspect of ADM is knowing what we, and our aircraft, are capable of accomplishing on a given day and what conditions we need to ensure a safe flight. These are our personal minimums; the minimum conditions we need for safe flight.

### Personal Minimums

Personal minimums refer to an individual pilot's set of procedures, rules, criteria, and guidelines for deciding whether, and under what conditions, to operate (or continue operating) in the National Airspace System.

You'll want to spend some time developing your personal minimums and that precipitates a few thoughts:

- You can't develop your personal minimums just before takeoff. They need to be established well in advance of your flight.
- If you haven't developed (or recently reviewed) your personal minimums, you should consider doing so before your next flight. A CFI can provide much needed guidance and help you perform a more accurate self-assessment of your flying.
- Once they are developed, write them down, and keep them in a place where you can refer to them easily.
- Finally — Refer to them often! Personal minimums can save your life, and the lives of your passengers.



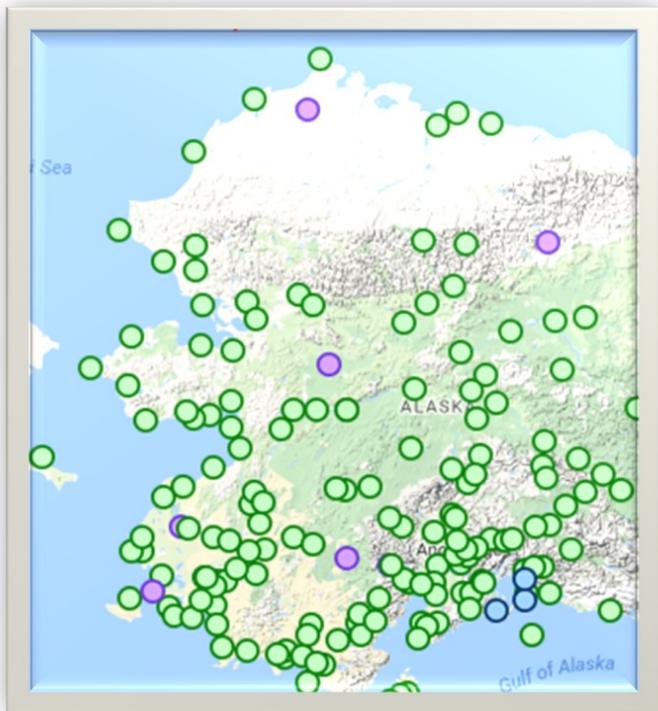
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## Before Flight: What Should I Consider?

Combined with ADM, personal minimums help you evaluate your risks before you begin your flight. Consider using the PAVE acronym to further develop your risk mitigation strategies in terms of the: **P**ilot, **A**ircraft, **e**nvironment, and **E**xternal Pressures. Ask yourself: Am I feeling well and rested today? Is the aircraft I'll be flying capable and equipped to complete this trip? Can I and the aircraft fly in the expected weather conditions? Do I feel pressured or rushed to get to my destination?

## Personal Minimums and Weather

Pilot personal minimums should be based on a clear assessment of pilot certification, experience, proficiency, and currency. Each pilot should establish personal weather minimums which may be (and often are) above FAA legal minimums for a VFR or IFR flight.



A map of where weather stations and cameras have been installed in Alaska. See [avcams.faa.gov](http://avcams.faa.gov)

When we look at the environmental aspect of the risk equation, weather is naturally a huge factor. There are times when it's easy to describe the flight environment and unfortunately there are also some times when it's not so easy.

Local flights that never leave the airport are pretty easy to define. The weather you see is pretty much the weather you've got. A local forecast will tell you what to expect in the way of changes and comparing that forecast with present conditions will give you a pretty good idea as to whether the forecast will pan out.

But what if you are taking a longer-than-local flight? Fortunately, there's a lot of weather information available, at least near cities and towns that have airports. However, if the area is more remote – like Alaska – weather information is much harder to come by.

To help fill that gap, the FAA developed a weather camera program in Alaska that provides real-time weather information to your computer or smartphone. Go to <http://avcams.faa.gov>, and click on any of the “dots” for real-time information.

The weather camera program in Alaska is currently undergoing a modernization plan that will include a website redesign and mobile apps for IOS and Android platforms. Plans are also underway to expand the program to the rest of the nation later this year, so stay tuned. As weather cams do become available, be sure to work them into your preflight planning and personal minimum checklists.

## Resources

- ◆ The FAA Weather Camera web page for real-time weather information in several US and Canadian locations  
<http://avcams.faa.gov>
- ◆ Personal Minimums Checklist  
<http://go.usa.gov/x9F2F>
- ◆ Safety Enhancement Fact Sheet on Personal Minimums  
<http://go.usa.gov/x9FTq>
- ◆ FAA Personal Minimums Development Guide  
<http://go.usa.gov/x9FTx>