2. File a flight plan. This is an excellent low cost insurance policy. The cost is the time it takes to fill it out. The insurance includes the knowledge that someone will be looking for you if you become overdue at your destination. Pilots can file flight plans either by using a website or by calling Flight Service. Flight planning applications are also available to file, activate, and close VFR flight plans.

3. Use current charts.

4. Use the navigation aids. Practice maintaining a good course–keep the needle centered.

5. Maintain a constant altitude which is appropriate for the direction of flight.

6. Estimate en route position times.

7. Make accurate and frequent position reports to the FSSs along your route of flight.

b. Simulated IFR flight is recommended (under the hood); however, pilots are cautioned to review and adhere to the requirements specified in 14 CFR Section 91.109 before and during such flight.

c. When flying VFR at night, in addition to the altitude appropriate for the direction of flight, pilots should maintain an altitude which is at or above the minimum en route altitude as shown on charts. This is especially true in mountainous terrain, where there is usually very little ground reference. Do not depend on your eyes alone to avoid rising unlighted terrain, or even lighted obstructions such as TV towers.

5–1–3. Notice to Air Missions (NOTAM) System

a. General. The NOTAM system provides pilots with time critical aeronautical information that is temporary, or information to be published on aeronautical charts at a later date, or information from another operational publication. The NOTAM is cancelled when the information in the NOTAM is published on the chart or when the temporary condition is returned to normal status. NOTAMs may be disseminated up to 7 days before the start of activity. Pilots can access NOTAM information online via NOTAM Search at: https://notams.aim.faa.gov/notamSearch/ or from an FSS.

b. Preflight. 14 CFR § 91.103, Preflight Action directs pilots to become familiar with all available information concerning a planned flight prior to departure, including NOTAMs. Pilots may change their flight plan based on available information. Current NOTAM information may affect:

1. Aerodromes.

2. Runways, taxiways, and ramp restrictions.

3. Obstructions.

4. Communications.

5. Airspace.

6. Status of navigational aids or radar service availability.

7. Other information essential to planned en route, terminal, or landing operations.

c. ARTCC NOTAMs. Pilots should also review NOTAMs for the ARTCC area (for example, Washington Center (ZDC), Cleveland Center (ZOB), etc.) in which the flight will be operating. You can find the 3 letter code for each ARTCC on the FAA's NOTAM webpage. These NOTAMs may affect the planned flight. Some of the operations include Central Altitude Reservation Function (CARF), Special Use Airspace (SUA), Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR), Global Positioning System (GPS), Flight Data Center (FDC) changes to routes, wind turbine, and Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS).

NOTE–
NOTAM information is transmitted using ICAO contractions to reduce transmission time. See TBL 5–1–2 for a listing of the most commonly used contractions, or go online to the following URL:
https://www.notams.faa.gov/downloads/contractions.pdf. For a complete listing of approved NOTAM Contractions, see FAA JO Order 7340.2, Contractions.