

Safety Bulletin

27 JUNE 2014

Differing VMC requirements between classes of airspace

Due to differing Visual Meteorological Conditions (VMC) requirements between airspace categories it may be necessary for pilots to request Special VFR clearances when entering or leaving Class D airspace from Class G airspace.

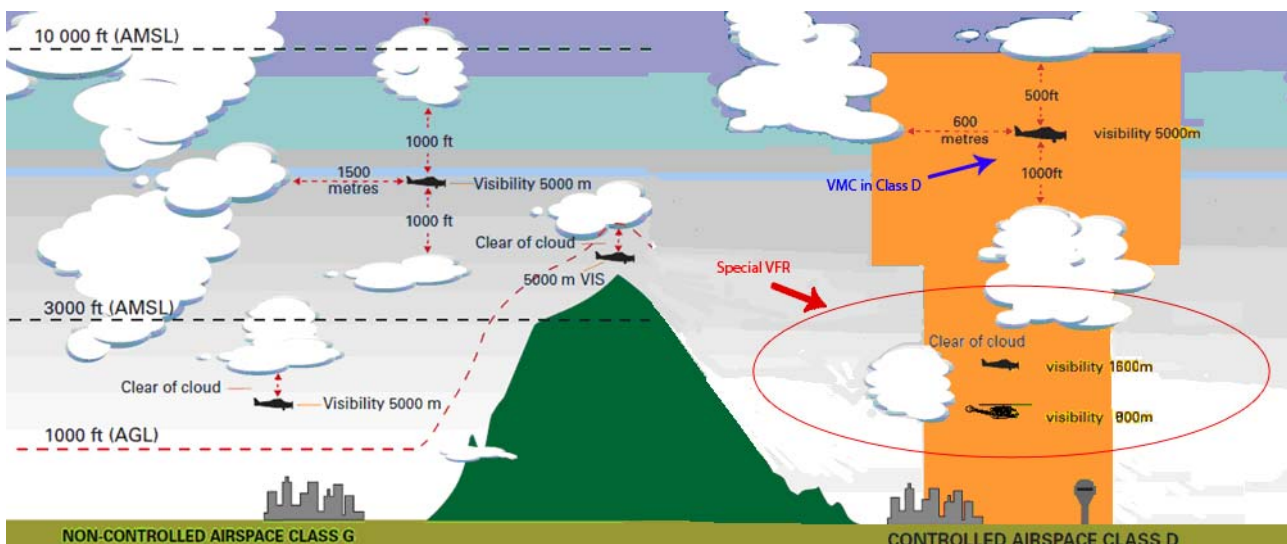
When operating in class G airspace below 3000 feet Above Mean Sea Level (AMSL) you only need to be clear of cloud with a minimum visibility of 5000 metres. This is different to VMC within Class D airspace, where the minimum distance to maintain VMC (regardless of level) is aircraft 500 ft vertically below cloud, 1000 ft above cloud, and 600 m horizontally from cloud. The visibility requirement is the same in Class G and D at 5000 m—see diagram 1.

If you are unable to meet those requirements then you can request a Special VFR clearance from Air Traffic Control (ATC). Once issued you may then continue clear of cloud with a minimum visibility of 1600 m for aircraft or 800 m for helicopters*. It is important to note ATC do not initiate Special VFR, this is a **pilot responsibility** to assess and decide on whether to request.

Several conditions are required for ATC to issue a Special VFR clearance:

1. by day only
2. for flight in the Control Zone (CTR), or in a Control Area (CTA) next to the CTR, for the purpose of entering or leaving the CTR
3. the Special VFR flight must not unduly delay an IFR flight.

Diagram 1



* When operating under a Special VFR clearance, pilots are responsible for ensuring that:

- a. the flight is conducted clear of cloud
- b. the visibility is not less than:
 - (1) for aeroplanes, 1600 m
 - (2) for helicopters, 800 m; or
 - (3) for balloons, 100 m below 500 ft Above Ground Level (AGL) and 3000 m at and above 500 ft AGL
- c. a helicopter is operated at such a speed that the pilot has adequate opportunity to observe any obstructions or other traffic in sufficient time to avoid a collision; and
- d. the flight is conducted in accordance with the requirements of CAR 157 with regard to low flying.

When operating under a Special VFR clearance, ATC are required to provide separation with IFR under all circumstances and between Special VFR flights when the Special VFR clearance is due to visibility.

For example, if cloud base is 1700 ft and visibility is 8 km:

VFR aircraft can be issued a Special VFR clearance at 1500 ft and will be provided with traffic information about other Special VFR aircraft because the visibility is above 5000 m.

For example, if cloud base is 1700 ft and visibility is 4000 m:

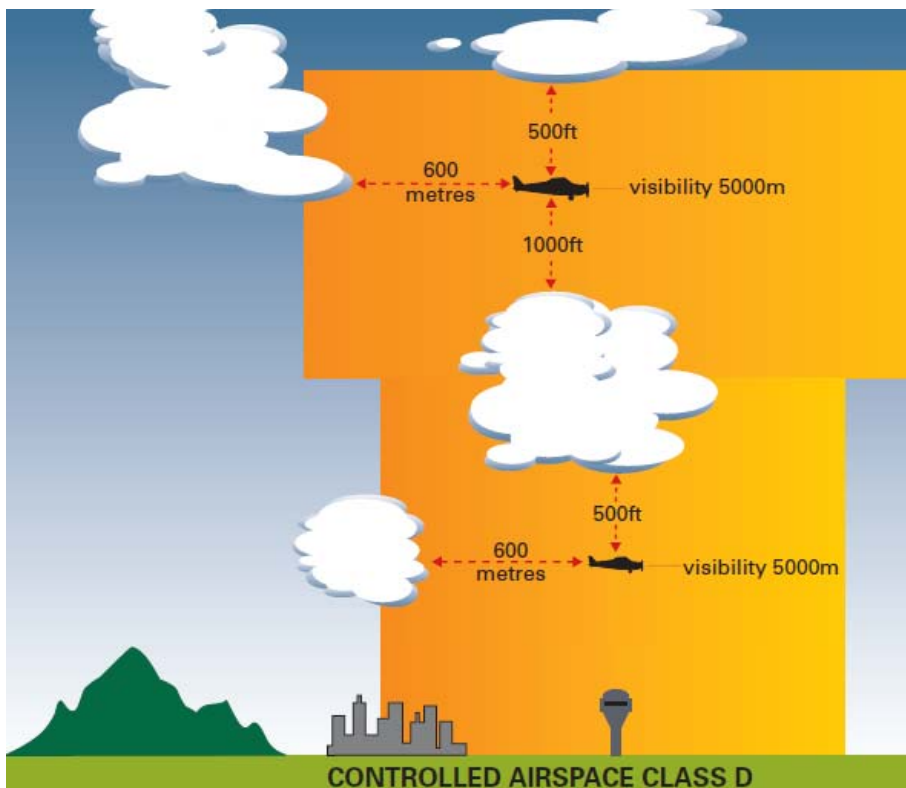
VFR aircraft can be issued a Special VFR clearance at 1500 ft and will be **separated** from other Special VFR aircraft and IFR aircraft.

Note:

1. ATC are not permitted to vector Special VFR flights, unless warranted by emergency conditions.
2. ATC cannot initiate Special VFR, it is a pilot responsibility.
3. Special VFR is not permitted in Class E airspace.

In summary, when operating in Class D airspace to meet VMC you must comply with the minimum distances as shown in diagram 2 below. If conditions do not allow this, the **pilot** can request a Special VFR clearance.

Diagram 2



Further information

- AIP ENR 1.2 - 1
- AIP ENR 1.6 - 1