

But if you do get ensnared in IMC


For CAA Flight Examiner (helicopter) Andy McKay, the IIMC occurrence described at the beginning of “VFR into IMC – Part One”, (*Vector* Winter 2022) is a classic illustration of much pilot behaviour, and results from a lack of currency and a lack of threat and error management.

“Training in handling startle and emergency situations is key,” he says.

“Pilots need to practise their response to any possible emergency situation, to the point where it’s ingrained in their brain. Then when they’re startled by suddenly finding themselves in IMC, they’ll immediately go to the procedure they recall so well – maybe only three or four steps – that they know will offer the best odds of getting them out of difficulty.

“If they get overwhelmed by the magnitude of the situation they’re suddenly in, pilots can do irrational things. But if they’ve practised what to do, so that it’s automatic, they have a fighting chance of getting out alive – unlike the pilot unskilled in handling startle, who’s going to make it up as they go along.”

Massey Lynch agrees with Andy that VFR pilots need to anticipate the possibility of loss of visual reference and create a plan of action should it happen.

“IIMC has also been fatal for a number of IFR-trained pilots. The common factor seems to be an event with a significant startle factor combined with the lack of any planning. This results in an attempt to transition to instruments too late, and after spatial disorientation starts to take effect.” 

Comments or queries? Email education@caa.govt.nz

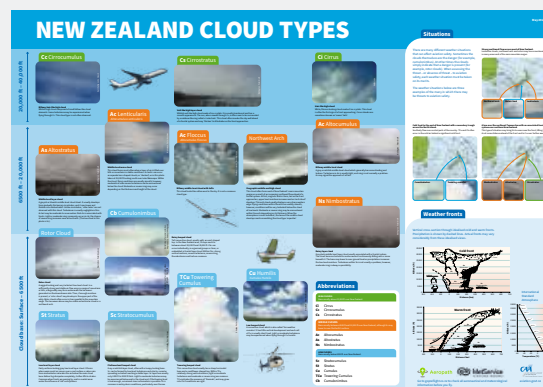
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