



Weather can move in quicker than you think!

Winter 2008

In the Bay Area we have extremely good weather for flying.....most of the time. Lately, in the latter part of Nov. and early Dec., we have had intermittent low fog and clouds in the morning, sometimes clearing to haze with few and scattered clouds in the afternoon.

On one of those recent days starting with a fogging morning then clearing to a hazy afternoon, Hayward's Atis announced clear with visibility 6 miles. Always vigilant, and after checking TAFs of OAK, SFO, and SJC, I scanned the surrounding Bay Area prior to take off, and noticed hazy moisture near OAK with a few clouds here and there Very flyable but I wanted to get out and back to LVK with my student as soon as possible before things changed dramatically.

On our way back less than one hour later at 4:30 pm, the sun was now directly in our eyes, visibility reduced to marginal VFR or less, a layer of clouds moved in over Sunol Grade and the surrounding hills, and Bravo airspace was above us that we didn't want to bust....voila!....**the sandwich effect**. After circling for several minutes to verify landmarks, with my student helping, not an easy task given the reduced visibility, the clouds shifted as a hole opened up right above a dip in the hills, I said "my aircraft" and went for it, barely keeping within legal cloud clearance limits.

As a CFI, even though I typically fly this area twice, maybe three or more times per week, just recognizing landmarks with this reduced visibility was a challenge. Of course we had a couple of alternatives had we not been able to get through that hole in the clouds. We could have gotten clearance through Class B to get up and over, or pick up an IFR clearance. The latter could have taken quite some time, and would not have been an option for a VFR pilot or without instrument charts.



As pilots, we all know how important reviewing weather is. Remembering how quickly the weather can deteriorate here in the Bay Area could prevent an unplanned landing at an airport other than your home airport or one not on your flight plan.

Sue Ballew

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