



*Repl. by 54A*

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# ADVISORY CIRCULAR

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

**SUBJECT:** CRUISE CLEARANCES

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1. **PURPOSE.** This Advisory Circular provides the aviation community guidance when operating under a "cruise" clearance.
2. **RELATED DOCUMENTS.**
  - a. Terminal Air Traffic Control Handbook 7110.8B.
  - b. En Route Air Traffic Control Handbook 7110.9B.
  - c. Airman's Information Manual.
  - d. Federal Aviation Regulations.
3. **DISCUSSION.** A cruise clearance is an air traffic control service that has been provided and used by pilots for quite some time and is normally used in uncongested areas for short duration flights. Because questions have arisen as to controller application and pilot responsibilities when operating under a cruise clearance, the procedure has been rewritten for clarification purposes. The amended procedure is definitive as to controller application and more clearly provides the means for the pilot to use the provisions of the Federal Aviation Regulations when proceeding to an airport that is within/below/ outside controlled airspace with or without a prescribed/approved instrument approach procedure and retain search and rescue protection. The amended procedure will become effective on 1 October 1971.
4. **PROCEDURES.**
  - a. To ensure complete understanding between pilot and controller the following will be included in the Airman's Information Manual and the air traffic control handbooks:

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"Cruise - A word used in an ATC clearance to indicate to a pilot that climb to and descent from the assigned altitude may be made at his discretion. Further, it is approval for the pilot to proceed to and make an approach at destination airport and can be used in conjunction with (1) an airport clearance limit at locations with an approved/prescribed instrument approach procedure. The FARs require that if an instrument letdown to an airport is necessary the pilot shall make the letdown in accordance with an approved/prescribed instrument approach procedure for that airport, or (2) an airport clearance limit at locations that are within/below/outside controlled airspace and without an approved/prescribed instrument approach procedure. Such a clearance is NOT AUTHORIZATION for the pilot to descend under IFR conditions below applicable MEA/MOCA nor does it imply that ATC is exercising control over aircraft in uncontrolled airspace; however, it provides a means for the aircraft to proceed to destination airport, descend and land in accordance with applicable FARs governing VFR flight operations. Also, this provides search and rescue protection until such time as the IFR flight plan is closed."

b. Some specific examples of what a cruise clearance provides and what is expected of the pilot are as follows:

- (1) A flight that will be conducted solely within controlled airspace and the destination airport is served with a prescribed/approved instrument approach procedure, a clearance would read: Example: (aircraft ident) CLEARED TO (name of airport) VIA (route) CRUISE (altitude). Air traffic control is advising the pilot that climb to and descent from assigned altitude can be made at pilot's discretion and that there is no known IFR traffic between the assigned altitude and the applicable minimum en route IFR altitude/minimum obstruction clearance altitude. It further authorizes the pilot to execute any prescribed/approved instrument approach procedure serving the destination airport, if necessary, and that the approach procedures associated airspace (including missed approach procedures) is free of any known IFR traffic.
- (2) A flight will be conducted into an airport that could be within/below/outside controlled airspace but without a prescribed/approved instrument approach procedure. The clearance would read the same as (1) above. The difference here is the fact that the airport does not have a prescribed/approved instrument approach procedure and that a portion of the flight may be conducted in uncontrolled airspace. The pilot would be expected to, upon arrival at destination airport,

make descent below applicable minimum en route IFR altitude/minimum obstruction clearance altitude and land in accordance with applicable Federal Aviation Regulations governing VFR operations; however, if IFR conditions existed upon arrival the pilot would be expected to advise air traffic control and request further clearance.

- c. It is the pilot's responsibility to adhere to the applicable Federal Aviation Regulations in both situations (1) and (2) above when conducting a flight into any airport that may be within/below/outside controlled airspace whether served with a prescribed/approved instrument approach procedure or not. Air traffic control is only providing the means for the pilot to use the applicable Federal Aviation Regulations provisions.
- 5. MISCELLANEOUS. In order to provide the broadest exposure to the contents of this Advisory Circular, organizations which publish bulletins to their members are requested to include in such bulletins any part or all of the foregoing material.



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