



# Air Safety Institute Safety Alert

## Avoiding Midair Collisions

Although the frequency of midair collisions has seen a decrease over the past few years, there have been five in the past year that have resulted in loss of life. Last fall, an amateur-built Searey collided with a Cessna 172 in upstate New York, a Cessna 170 and a Skykits-Savannah collided in Nevada, and a Cirrus SR22 collided with a Robinson R22 helicopter in Maryland. This summer, a Cessna 150 and an F-16 collided in South Carolina. Most recently, a Cessna 172 and a Sabreliner jet collided near San Diego, California. While each accident has a specific set of circumstances and the NTSB is in the process of investigating, there are steps pilots can take to minimize the risks.

1. See and avoid continues to be the foundation for flying under visual flight rules. Pilots must be extra vigilant and constantly scan the airspace for traffic.
2. Always fly on a designated VFR cruise altitude: Easterly—odd thousands plus 500 feet; Westerly—even thousands plus 500 feet.
3. Request ATC's VFR flight following service to the maximum extent possible.
4. If your aircraft is equipped, ensure the transponder is always on to increase your aircraft's electronic visibility.
5. Consider equipping with ADS-B (both Out and In) so you can benefit from the increased situational awareness available with the Traffic Information Service-Broadcast (TIS-B).
6. Consider installing an active traffic system or carry a portable traffic awareness product.
7. More than 50 percent of all midair collisions happen within 5nm of an airport—extra vigilance is required in the terminal area.
  - a. At towered airports monitor the frequency and communicate early with the tower to gain situational awareness.
  - b. At nontowered airports, broadcast your position and intentions no later than 10nm from the airport. Follow standard traffic pattern entry procedures, and broadcast your position and intentions on the common traffic advisory frequency in accordance with Section 4-1-9 of the Aeronautical Information Manual.
  - c. Ensure aircraft landing lights, position lights, and anticollision lights are on in the terminal area for maximum visibility.

**Bottom line:** Midair collisions happen infrequently; however, when they occur, the chances for injury or death are substantial. To learn more about midair collision avoidance and to increase your safety margins, please see the Air Safety Institute's Collision Avoidance Spotlight (<http://www.aopa.org/Pilot-Resources/Air-Safety-Institute/Safety-Spotlights/Collision-Avoidance>).